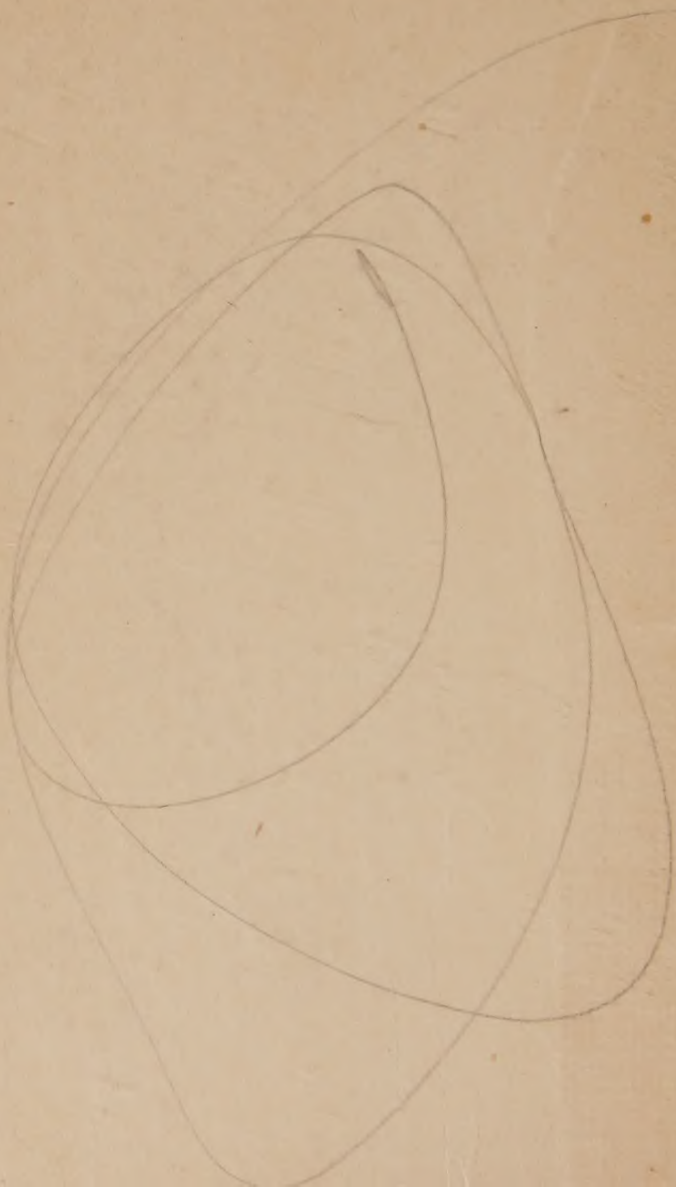
# TALITHA CUMI

ANNIE J. HOLLAND



Portland, Ore.
December 25th
1924
To Laura Ardath Ford
from
Dad.

# TALITHA CUMI

A STORY OF FREEDOM
THROUGH CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

By ANNIE J. HOLLAND

*"There must be something real and tangible to rejoice over!" - Page 15*

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# TALITHA CUMI

## CHAPTER I

### THE TREASURE

HER name was Penelope. The name in itself formed a grievance, and certainly few names could have seemed less applicable to the weazen-faced, hunchbacked little girl upon whom it had been bestowed. Could she have been called by some simple short name, Jane or Mary or Ann — but Penelope! She shrank away sensitively whenever she was addressed by it in the presence of strangers, lest she should catch a smile or a glance of mingled surprise and pity, and know they were saying in their hearts: —

"What a name for that poor child!"

Then there were other grievances. The prettiness of her sisters, for instance, made Penelope's heart ache. Not that she would have had them less pretty — far from it. But the prettiness seemed to point the fact that *she* had no beauty

whatsoever. They were tall, lithe girls, these sisters of Penelope; even Stella, who was five years younger, was taller than she, and Agnes, but two years older than Stella, had shot above Penelope so long ago she hardly remembered the time when her eyes were on a level with Agnes's eyes. Then her sisters' hair! Penelope looked at it with hungry admiration, but with the fear always lurking in her heart that any word of praise bestowed upon it might call attention to her own, so dark and heavy and lustreless, hanging in stringy, graceless locks over her poor crooked shoulders, and lying flat and thin above her brow. So, in a furtive, greedy, sensitive way, she watched how the yellow hair caught the sunlight; and the toss of it in the breeze; and the flutter of the little stray curls about Grace's or Helen's ears; and to see how queenly was Marcia's head, with its crown of shining hair — little golden lights showing here and there among the brown.

Poor Penelope! She had a passionate love of the beautiful. But there was neither envy nor bitterness in Penelope's heart; she only longed, in a grieved, pitiful fashion, to possess her own rightful share of beauty.

Her sisters' eyes were a grievance, too. Such bright eyes they were! Penelope thought they looked like stars, and was never tired watching their shifting expression; but always in the same shrinking manner in which she watched the hair. Which sister had the most beautiful eyes was a point she never could decide; for no sooner did she settle it that Marcia's eyes, for instance, were the most beautiful, than she saw no eyes in the world could be more beautiful than Grace's — so blue, with such depth, so warm with love light. So she went the rounds, quite impartially, had she thought to notice this; with a disconsolate look on her little thin face, as she sat on her low seat, watching — always watching; with a painful consciousness in her heart of being unlovely, and having eyes — well, perhaps no one quite knew what Penelope's eyes were like — wells of questioning pain, it might be. They were eyes which haunted one, which was possibly the reason no one, not even those who loved her most, could look into them long.

So the beautiful eyes gave Penelope great pain, by reminding her constantly of her own, so dull and sad.

The sisters were very affectionate in their

manner toward Penelope, and always treated her with the greatest consideration. But there was a touch of pity in their thoughtfulness which hurt her sensitive heart; and when she heard them — and she often did hear them — speak of her as "Poor Penny," the ready tears sprang to her eyes. But no one discovered this. She always veiled her eyes, if there were any one to observe her, till the tears were choked back, lest they should see, and find out, by what she had been pained. Agnes and Stella showed the same protecting care for her as did the older sisters, Grace and Helen and Marcia; and this kindness became a grievance, for to Penelope it seemed to point out and emphasize the difference between herself and them, and to call attention to it, and she winced when she heard people say, as she did now and then: —

"How kind those girls are to that poor little thing!"

Then Penelope felt she was a sorrow to her mother, and this was the greatest grievance of all. So great indeed, that she cried bitterly over it many and many a time. It was so painful to feel the sight of her made her mother sad; to watch with shrinking dread, when she found her

mother's kind eyes resting on her, for the shadow of pity and grief she knew would soon come stealing into them — and to see it come; to hear a certain quality in her mother's voice, when she said to strangers, "This is my fourth little daughter, Penelope," which was absent from it when she named her other daughters, and to know why it was there, and that the strangers were pitying her and pitying her mother, and saying in their hearts: —

"What a misfortune — poor child — what a sorrow to her mother!"

The dread of this made her steal away, whenever it was possible, on the arrival of strangers at their home; to put off, as long as she could, the trying ordeal, and to plan how she might come in among them least obtrusively, and spare most the feelings of her parents and sisters, whom she loved with all the strength of a loyal heart.

"O dear," she moaned on one of these occasions, when she had stolen away to cry in solitude over the bitterness of her lot, "I wish they wouldn't pity me — I wish they wouldn't pity me!"

It was a beautiful morning in early spring. The brown bank on which she sat was sprinkled blue with violets; in the rocking pines the wind

went with a low murmuring sound, like the far-away note of the sea; in the meadows, where the sun lay bright, the water, among the dead rank grass showed like splashes of molten silver. Penelope was conscious of the morning loveliness, though the eyes through which she looked were so tear-filled that all the objects within range of her vision appeared unsteady, and to topple about in a world of water.

It had been a trying morning to Penelope. There were friends from a distance, people whom she had never seen before, visiting at her home, and when she had begun to feel they were used to the sight of her, and to lose a little of her fear of them (which seemed to make it doubly hard to bear), one of the ladies had said, "Come here, you poor, dear little thing," and had taken her upon her lap, and folded her in her strong, motherly arms, and Penelope felt a hot tear splash upon her cheek.

At the memory of the hot tear, the trees and rocks and shrubs and fences went swimming suddenly, and then obliterated themselves, while the tears in which they had performed these feats, overflowing, chased down Penelope's thin cheek, and dropped upon her hands.

"They wouldn't, if they knew," she thought, in a paroxysm of weeping. "They would never remind me, in these ways, how unlike I am to all the rest, if they knew how it hurts — hurts! But they don't understand — and they mean to be kind. It seems strange! *I* should understand — it seems to me."

She swallowed hard and, as though she in some way disposed of her grief with the lump in her throat, the tears ceased flowing, and gradually she gained control of herself, and only her lips quivered, and a sob now and then caught her breath.

She put out her little thin hand with a tender touch upon the blue violets. She was passionately fond of flowers — perfect flowers; but anything like deformity in the floral kingdom made her shudder. She felt the keenest sympathy with everything misshapen. If it were only a leaf, she longed, in a painful, personal way, as though it were pointing out and making much of her own deformity, to screen it from observation, and help it to hide itself. But there was no deformity among the violets, and her loving fingers moved among them lingeringly. They were large and bright and sweet and perfect, and trembled joyously as the breeze crept over the dull, brown bank.

"You dear beauties," she murmured. "You are like bits of the sky itself — and I know you are happy, you nod so gayly, as though you were saying, 'Good morning, dear world, good morning.' But why shouldn't you be gay, when you help to make the world so lovely? What a happy thing it must be — oh, what a happy thing it must be, to be beautiful and sweet and good to look at!"

She struggled for a moment against the emotions surging in her heart; then, in a tumult of sorrow, longing, distress, and rebellion, dropped over upon the violet-strewn bank, and sobbed as though her heart would break. In her abandonment she failed to hear the approach of quick, light footsteps, and started violently into a sitting posture when a sweet voice said: —

"Little girl, don't cry — don't cry."

Penelope dashed the tears from her blinded eyes, to meet the blue eyes of a young girl bending toward her.

"What is the matter?" she said. "Can I help you? I could not resist speaking, you seemed so distressed."

"Thank you," said Penelope, struggling to steady the convulsive twitching of her lips. "No — I need no help. But you are very kind."

"May I sit down with you for a minute? Thank you. It is very pleasant here. How thick the violets are, and so blue! They look bluer because everything else is brown, I suppose. The flashing of the water in the meadow drew me on — it is like silver — a wonderful sheen! I caught glimpses of it through the trees. Then I saw you. I left my pony over in the road — or rather I drove him a short distance in among the trees. He is an unambitious little beast, and will stand wherever I ask him to, and as long as I please. I wanted to walk about a little, and he was ready for a nap, so it seemed a good arrangement. But I hope we are not trespassing!"

"Oh, no indeed!" said Penelope, quickly. "People are welcome to walk about the grove — they often do." Then, with a sudden friendly feeling for the girl at her side, she added: "I am glad you did. I am glad you like it. It is very dear to me. I could almost say I *love* the place."

"I don't wonder. It is beautiful. And thank you for making me welcome in such a sweet way. I have never driven so far in this direction before, but the morning is so lovely, I couldn't make myself turn back. I am Love Hathaway, and am visiting my grandparents — you may know their

place — Weehaukn; though it is six or seven miles from here, I should say — perhaps more."

"Papa may know them," Penelope said, with more interest than a minute before it seemed possible she could feel in anything.

"Very likely. Grandpa goes out but little now, however, and they live very quietly. I come to visit them twice a year. I have been here a month now, and am going home to-morrow. Do you hear the wind through the trees?" and the blue eyes, that had thoughtfully avoided Penelope thus far, turned upon her.

Penelope nodded. "I like to hear it," she said, a listening expression on her thin, tear-stained face. "It sounds like the sea. When I close my eyes and listen to it, I seem to see the sea — so blue, and dotted over with glistening sails, with a curl of soft white foam, where the water comes up, with that endless murmur — just the sort of sound the wind is making now!"

"It is like it! though I never noticed it before. But the sea is not always blue, and dotted over with glistening sails!"

"It is the way I see it when I shut my eyes. I don't like storms. I never see a stormy sea in fancy."

"Well — that is nice. We ought to see things, in our thought of them, as we like them to be, I suppose. I shall always think of the sea after this, when I hear the wind in the pine trees. I like the smell of the pines, too, when the sun is hot and bright. I am fond of the country anyway, but I don't get so very much of it. We live in the city — Boston."

"Boston! Do you? I never have been in Boston, but my sisters have — all of them. Marcia — she is my oldest sister — is to be married in September, and will live in Boston. She says I am to make her a long visit this winter."

"That is nice. You will enjoy it. And winter is a good time for you to go, because you won't miss quite so much of what you have here. This is the most beautiful place I have ever seen — the most to my taste. It is more beautiful than Weehaukn — and I have always considered that the loveliest spot in the world — but we are minus a pine grove there. Will you let me hunt you up this winter? I should love to."

"Why, yes," said Penelope, with pleased cadence in her voice. She was conscious of a strong attraction toward this young girl. "Then you will see Marcia," she added. "Marcia is

lovely — I think she is beautiful. All my sisters are pretty."

Love Hathaway shot a quick glance at the suddenly drooping face, then looked away across the shimmering meadow. She said slowly, after a minute: —

"You wouldn't dream of shutting your eyes and seeing them as anything *but* pretty, would you?"

"Why, no indeed," Penelope answered, in a surprised tone. "They *are* pretty!"

She wondered a little at the thoughtful look on the pretty face still turned toward the meadow. Love Hathaway reminded her of her sister Grace. They had the same bright blue eyes and golden hair. But Grace was tall, while Love was quite the reverse. She was speculating on the probability of their being about the same age, when Love, turning unexpectedly, surprised the calculation in her face.

"What are you thinking of?" she laughed.

Penelope colored in confusion, as she answered: —

"You look like my sister Grace — you remind me of her. And I was wondering if you are perhaps as old as she."

"I am eighteen."

"Eighteen! Why, you are older. Grace is but sixteen. You are as old as Helen."

Penelope's eyes were quite round with surprise, and Love laughed again. "I am a wee woman," she said. "But there are advantages in being small. For instance, I couldn't drive round with Bobbie, the way I do, if I were tall and large, and Bobbie and I are old friends. We should miss one another. I have had him ever since I was a little girl. Then if I hadn't driven around with Bobbie, you see I shouldn't have found you this morning — and that would have been a loss, for I am persuaded we are to be fast friends."

"Are you?" said Penelope, with her beautiful smile, which came so willingly at all times, and vanished so quickly, seeming by its flickering brightness to emphasize the settled sadness of her face. "It would make me most happy, I am sure. You are very kind, and I hope Miss Hathaway — "

"Call me Love — please."

"Shall I?" with a doubtful look. "It seems so — " she hesitated. "But if you are willing — if you wish me to, I should dearly like to call you by

it. Love — it is a dear name. It seems to me I could almost grow beautiful myself if I were always being called Love. But," sorrowfully, "of course I couldn't. Love Stuart — it is a great deal prettier than Penelope Stuart."

"Is your name Penelope? Why, I think Penelope is a lovely name. It has a grand sound."

"That is just the trouble! It seems to belong to some one who is — oh, so different from me! It doesn't suit me, and so it calls attention to — you know what!"

Love looked away again across the meadow, but presently her eyes stole back to the sad little face beside her, and she said: —

"You won't feel hurt if I ask, will you? and don't answer unless you wish to; I will not take offence; I think I should understand your feeling — but was that what you were crying over when I came up?"

"Not the name," said Penelope, "but the — other. Yes."

She hung her head, and stirred a bunch of violets near her with her gentle fingers. There was a short silence; then Love said: —

"There is a nice verse in the Bible which tells us to 'Rejoice evermore.'"

Penelope looked up quickly. "I couldn't *rejoice*, of course," she said simply.

"It doesn't specify any exceptions," Love answered. "'Rejoice evermore' is the precept. There must be something real and tangible to be rejoiced over!"

Penelope looked perplexed. "I *can't* rejoice," she said again. "How can I? I can't, of course. But I try to be grateful for what I have — all the love, you know, and my beautiful home. But I must cry sometimes — I can't help it." Then, with a sudden remembrance of the morning's experience, of the hot tear, and the pitying cadences in the kindly voice of her mother's friend, she added, "You don't pity me — I feel you do not; and I don't understand why you do not."

"Why should I pity you?" The girl's bright eyes looked steadily into Penelope's face, and Penelope regarded her wonderingly for a moment before she answered: —

"Other people do. Because my back is crooked, you know," drawing in her breath with a sharp hissing sound, as though the admission hurt her. "Because I am all misshapen — and unlovely. Why, everybody pities me!"

"Does the pity help you?"

"Oh, no," with a piteous droop at the corners of her mouth. "They wouldn't do it, if they knew how it makes me feel. They mean it in kindness, but it seems to — to — "

"Fasten it upon you," suggested Love, as Penelope paused for a word.

"I don't know if that is just what I mean," said Penelope, considering. "But perhaps it is. It keeps it always in my mind, anyway. I am always afraid some one is looking at me, or is going to look at me; and if they do, of course they see— O dear!" she broke off, with a heavy sigh.

Nothing was said for a few minutes; the only sound was the murmur of the wind in the tree-tops. Then Love turned suddenly to Penelope and said, holding out a book she carried:—

"Do you know this book? You have never seen it, have you? It is 'Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures,' by Mary Baker G. Eddy. I am a Christian Scientist." It was plain that Penelope was in no way enlightened by this avowal, and Love added: "I shouldn't have my mother now, Penelope, but for Christian Science. The doctors had given her up; they said she could live but a very short time. That was six years ago — and she is perfectly well."

"Why!" said Penelope, in an awe-struck gasp.

"I know personally of many other demonstrations equally wonderful."

"Why!" gasped Penelope again.

"Penelope," said Love, "God is good." Penelope nodded. "God is infinite." Penelope nodded again. She had been carefully taught; the Catechism was at her tongue's end. "Then good is infinite," Love went on. "It isn't good to be sick, is it, or sinful?" Penelope shook her head, adding mentally, "or deformed."

"God," said Love, "never sends sickness and sorrow upon His children, and as we come to understand this, we can banish these seeming ills. They have no real foundation, for they do not belong to God; and everything that is real *does* belong to God, and is the expression of the one infinite Mind. Jesus taught us this — it is the teaching of Christian Science. I don't know if I make my meaning plain, but if you admit that God is *infinite* and *good*, that says it all. There can't be more than infinite, and the infinite must include all there is. And if the infinite is good, there can't be the shadow of a place for evil. You can see that! It's unanswerable, isn't it? Papa is fond of illustrating with the story of the

withered hand. Jesus saw the man as the perfect child of God; others saw him as imperfect, that is, with a withered hand. Jesus told him to stretch forth his hand — not the withered appearance! — and the man stretched it forth whole as the other. It was Jesus' perception of man's relation to God that enabled him to destroy the belief of a withered hand. He knew there was no truth in it! If you read the Bible with this thought in mind, you will see that Jesus never treated or spoke of a diseased condition as though it were real, or something that must be submitted to or endured."

"But Jesus was the Christ," ventured Penelope.

"He didn't see less clearly on that account, did he? Of course not. He saw distinctly, where we see feebly, the real man and his relation to God, and so destroyed the unreality. He told his followers to do his works!"

"But — did they?"

"For a time. Christian Scientists do now. You know what I told you about my mother? She was under a claim of consumption! Wait, Penelope, until next winter, and I will take you to our church, and you will hear of and see many others, who, through the teachings of our dear

Leader, Mrs. Eddy, have been brought out of darkness into light. May I sing for you — one of her hymns? I love to sing!"

"Oh, do!" and Penelope nestled a little closer to this girl, who seemed to have something of hope for her, though the sense of what it might be was still undefined in her heart.

Love sang the hymn softly, sweetly, her blue eyes fixed on the rising ground on the opposite side of the river, where a beautiful grayish crimson flush betrayed spring's brooding presence. When she finished Penelope drew a long breath.

"It is beautiful," said she. "I have caught something — a strain, you know — I have never known anything about before. I can't explain it. It comes like a breath of — peace. That first line, about the harp-strings — would you mind singing that verse once more?"

"I wouldn't mind singing it all! I will teach you the hymn if you would like to have me."

So, sitting in the sunshine, Love taught Penelope the hymn; and with little else to break the silence save the swelling sound like the sea in the tree-tops, they sang it over and over together and separately.

"It doesn't apply to everything, I suppose," said

Penelope, breaking into a little silence which had fallen between them.

"What doesn't apply to everything?" asked Love, turning her head, and looking down at the little creature close to her side.

"You don't mean it can cure — all kinds of — misfortunes, do you?"

"What cannot God do?"

"But not — like me?"

Love felt her trembling, as she answered, "Yes, like you."

After a minute Penelope burst out sharply: —

"Oh, you can't mean it! But you wouldn't deceive me, I know — you wouldn't mean to. Only — how *could* it be! You can't really *mean* — "

"I really do."

"Not — straight?"

"Yes, straight."

"And — pretty?"

"And pretty."

A shiver went over the little figure, then a sob shook her from head to foot, and she buried her face in her two little thin hands. "It — can't be — it — can't," she said, between her sobs.

"It can," said Love. Then she opened "Science and Health," and read while Penelope

cried, and presently, when the sobbing ceased, and Penelope's tearful face stole a glance upward, there was a clear light in the blue eyes which met her own, and a smile on the sweet lips. Love's head gave a little sidewise jerk, as much as to say, "I am right; and you will find it out in time." Then she put "Science and Health" into Penelope's hand, saying: —

"It is for you. I didn't know exactly why I brought it this morning; but I know now. It is the greatest treasure you have — or can have. You will read it, I know; and as you read you will discern the truth; you will come to see, as you have never seen before, what Jesus lived and taught. It is a late edition. I had it only a few months ago — eighty-fourth — see? Isn't it beautiful? You will come to regard it as your dearest possession! I have heard lots of people say no money could buy their copy if they could not get another. I must go. Bobbie will be quite discouraged, I'm afraid. Oh, come with me! Yes, do. I'll introduce you to Bobbie, and I assure you he is worth knowing. When I come at Thanksgiving — we are coming to spend Thanksgiving here — I shall plan for you to have a ride with him."

So, chatting pleasantly, Love's arm over Penelope's shoulder, they wound their way among the gray trunks of the pine trees, to the place where Bobbie was patiently standing. He whinnied joyfully when he saw them; and Penelope praised and petted him to Love's evident satisfaction.

"You know we all have our mountains," she said, looking down from the pony cart upon the small figure standing beside it.

"Our what?"

"Mountains. We have to work."

"You mean it isn't easy, I suppose."

"Something like that. I always get a great deal of comfort from the story of Moses. He had to go to the mountain top to meet with God, you remember; not because God was at the top of the mountain any more truly than He was at the base, but Moses could not meet with Him until he had climbed. He had some work to do. I suppose he slipped and stumbled and bruised himself going up, and got discouraged at times, perhaps. I always picture it in this way; it is such a comfort; because we know that in spite of all obstacles he *did* get to the top. Every step he took brought him nearer, whether he realized it or not. And once there, all memory of the difficulties he had

encountered must have faded out. We know how his face shone with the glory of his reward! Now good-by — I'll see you at Thanksgiving. Study 'Science and Health,' and your Bible, and you will surely know the truth. Now, Bobbie!" and Bobbie, satisfied that his head was at last turned homeward, dashed off at a great speed.

Penelope watched and waved, until a turn in the road hid the gay little pony cart from her sight, and then wandered back, with a new light on her thin face, to the knoll at the edge of the grove, where she was crying when Love found her, and seating herself on that part of the bank where there were no violets to be crushed, opened her "new treasure," and began to read.

She read for a long time, then closed the book with a long-drawn breath, and looked about.

"It is true," she murmured. "I feel it is. But it seems almost too good — I can hardly believe it for joy." She looked away across the meadow, with unseeing eyes, and then opened the book again musingly, at the preface, and read the first few lines. "How shall I ever tell it?" she said with sudden excitement in her voice. "How can I make them believe that I —" She stopped and pondered long. "But I know it," she burst out.

"It is true — I feel it is. Oh, I can never, never be unhappy for a moment in my life again! Love told me to learn the 'scientific statement of being' — and I must. But I'll have to go home now. And I'll say it every night — she told me to. Dear Love! I'll do everything she told me to. How happy it makes me! I feel so light — as though something wonderful had happened to me. It *is* wonderful."

She opened "Science and Health" again and read a page or two, then closed it lingeringly, and put it in her pocket. Penelope's pockets were a wonder as to size. She said she liked "to keep things in them," about which there could be little doubt. Grace once, laughing, told her that "a pocket was cut out, and then her dress built about it." "You shouldn't tease Penny," Helen said, when she and Grace were alone. "If there is any little thing that is a comfort to her, I am sure you are the last one to wish to make her feel it an oddity." So nothing more was ever said on this subject, and Penelope possessed her pockets in peace.

"I don't believe I will say anything about it," thought Penelope, with a meditative look, her hand still in her pocket with her book. "At least,

I won't make myself tell. Love said not to force things — I hope I'll remember all she said. Anyway, I'll wait till it comes natural and easy to tell them — it may be right off; but I won't make any plans. How happy I am! What will they say when they do know — they won't be able to speak, perhaps, for joy."

A robin flew into a tree near by, and poured out a happy song. It was the first robin she had heard that spring, and she stretched eagerly this way and that to see him.

"Oh, you dear beauty!" she cried, finally spying him. "How glad I am to see you! I am happy, too, robin — oh, so happy! because — I almost believe, you look so wise peering at me, that you could understand if I told you the secret — the wonderful new hope that is filling me full of sunshine! But I guess I'll let you find it out. Build your nest in that tree, birdie, and sometime — sometime — you may — you will see a change in me."

The wonder of the thought silenced her, and her eyes turned away across the meadow. Then she tried to sing the hymn Love had taught her, but the sound of her own voice, now that she was alone, disconcerted her, and she broke off

abruptly. "Saying it will do, I guess," she thought. "Then I will go home. It seems dreadfully hard work to get away from the place this morning, because I have found my treasure here, the dearest possession I have in the world. But I'll take that with me wherever I go, and really I mustn't stay here any longer, for they may be wondering where I am." She said the hymn quite through, then started on a quick trot down the avenue.

## CHAPTER II

### CROCUSES

PENELOPE, cogitating, hurried along the avenue, conscious of a richer sheen in the sunshine; a subtle, new beauty in the world she had never felt before. Her musings were upon the subject of when and how she could tell the family what Love Hathaway had told her. It would not be easy, she began to perceive, to say to them that divine Love could and would make her straight; she wasn't sure even that it would prove a simple matter to show them "Science and Health." How could she ever answer their questions, and meet their surprised eyes? But she hadn't to settle the matter. God would take care of it all. Love Hathaway had told her this, and again and again she put the questions aside, only to find herself next minute going over the same ground again. But this undercurrent of mild anxiety took nothing from the gladness that filled her heart to overflowing. A new light had broken

upon her; something inexplicable, like a deep, calm, immeasurable peace, seemed brooding over her. Her confidence was unshaken. "Under His wings shalt thou trust," she murmured. Love Hathaway had quoted the verse. "I'm not afraid," said Penelope. "There is nothing to be afraid of." Strange words for Penelope Stuart! but she did not think of this. "God will take care of it all," she mused. Still she couldn't effectually resist thinking a little about the matter, and making a plan or two. Presently the joy in her heart welled up and bubbled over tunefully in the hymn Love taught her.

Marcia, who was gathering crocuses in the garden, heard the singing, and glanced over her shoulder to see who the singer might be. Seeing it was Penelope, and surprised by the brisk pace at which she was moving, she straightened up quickly and said: —

"Why, you dear little song-bird! Where have you been? Come here, dearie, and tell sister what you have been doing."

At the sound of Marcia's voice, Penelope stopped abruptly, a little confused and startled. She had not seen her, had not observed even

how near the house she was, and glanced involuntarily backward, with a wondering look, along the sunny avenue mottled by the maple shadows to the grove she seemed to have left but the minute before; though to Penelope, who did not like walking, the grove was usually a long way off. But what was she to do? On the alert for her opportunity, she thought perhaps it had come now. All her little plans had fled, however; not the fragment of one remained, and she cast about hurriedly, as she stood awkwardly looking at Marcia for suitable words in which to clothe what she had to tell. She wished she could escape Marcia for a little; for the first time in her life she was unwilling to go to her.

"Come," called Marcia, again, "and see the flowers, and tell me what you have been doing," starting along the walk toward her.

"Oh, I'll know how to tell her," said Penelope, with a sudden bright thought, "'under His wings shalt thou trust.' There is nothing to fear — Love said there is nothing to fear," and crossing the spongy ground lying between the avenue and garden, met her sister smilingly in the garden path.

Marcia rested the hand holding the yellow

crocuses on Penelope's shoulder, as she stooped to kiss her; but, checked by something unusual in the thin, sallow face, caught herself back without kissing her, and said in a surprised tone: —

"Penny Stuart! What has happened to you?"

"Happened," echoed Penelope, with a shining in her eyes that did not escape Marcia.

"Something has. Or is it a secret? Oh, it is a secret — I see it in your face. Now what can it be, I wonder? Is it a birthday? No, it can't be a birthday — nobody has a birthday until October — except you, and you don't plan secrets about your own birthday, I know. Perhaps it's Christmas — or is it that other event, which comes long before Christmas?"

A soft light came into Marcia's beautiful eyes as she referred to "that other event" — the coming event of her wedding — and taking Penelope's little thin face between both hands, the crocuses still squeezed between one thumb and forefinger, she gave her a tender kiss, expressive of so much love and happiness in going — so much love and regret in leaving them all. Penelope dimly comprehended something of this; it was part of the mystery which surrounded Marcia in those days,

and made her doubly charming. Then Marcia laughed, a short, happy little laugh, and said: —

"I've guessed it, haven't I, sweetheart? It's something for my wedding — I won't try to find out what! Only whatever it is, I know it will be the loveliest thing in the world to me."

"But it isn't that," said Penelope, in confusion. "At least," considering, "I don't think it is. But it may have — I don't know — something to do with it. Oh, I wish it might!" a wave of color suddenly overspreading her face. "I would like it to be for that time of all things." Then, forgetting herself in the great longing of her heart, "Do you think it will be?" she asked. "So soon as that, I mean?"

"You little goose, how can I tell," laughed Marcia, "when you haven't divulged your secret? You tell me — then I'll tell you."

"I — I don't know how," faltered Penelope, trying to recall how Love Hathaway had told her, but before she could formulate a thought, Marcia had said with a laugh: —

"Then I can't tell you. We shall have to await developments — and that is the nicer way. It is a wonderful secret, I am sure, to bring that look into your face; I am quite curious to know what it can

be. But I'll know in time, won't I, dearie? And how delightful it will be! Aren't the flowers beautiful? It is good to see their bright faces after the long winter!"

Penelope nodded, but her thoughts were elsewhere. The great truth of the Christ healing was a stranger in her gates, and she was hardly for a minute forgetful of its unfamiliar presence. It was the first interest she had ever had apart from the family, and the consciousness that she did have this interest gave her a feeling of separation, as though something intangible, but very real, had reared itself between them. It made Marcia difficult to talk to. "But it will be just as easy as it was to talk to Love, when once they know," she solaced herself. Then she tried getting at the matter in a roundabout fashion; anxious to do her part, fearful lest the opportunity God would provide might be given and pass unimproved.

"Shall I visit you in Boston next winter, Marcia?" she asked, anxious because of what the question was leading up to.

"I hope so, sweetheart. It is one of my dearest plans. But I fancied you did not — Oh, have you changed your mind? How glad I am!"

"I always wanted to, Marcia," a little reproach-

fully. "Only I felt afraid of seeing strangers. You know why! Is Commonwealth Avenue near Beacon Street, Marcia?"

"Yes, dear," Marcia said, with a downward glance upon the little figure at her side. They were strolling about the garden, one of Penelope's little hands clasped in Marcia's, so soft and white, while Marcia's other hand, holding the crocuses, rested upon Penelope's further shoulder. "Why do you ask?" she added.

Penelope did not answer this question. "Did you ever hear of the Christian Science church?" she asked presently, with an effort. "It's in Boston."

"Christian Science," said Marcia. "Let me think. I must put on my considering cap. I seem to have heard the name, but I don't know how or when," and Penelope's heart, which was beating fast with hope, stilled suddenly from disappointment. "There are a great many sects, Congregationalism, Methodism, Unitarianism, and it would be quite impossible to keep track of them all. Besides, why should we try? We hold the Faith once delivered to the Saints, you know — we need not bother our heads about isms. Trinity will be my church home when I go to

Boston to live. You will like going to Trinity, dearie, I know; it's beautiful! George's ancestors have been connected with Trinity parish ever since it was founded — oh, a long way back. The family are very proud of the fact."

"Can't you remember anything about the Christian Science church?" asked Penelope, with suppressed eagerness.

"I can't seem to," returned Marcia, knitting her brows. "I'm not sure that I have heard anything — although the name seems slightly familiar."

"Christian Science heals the sick," said Penelope, with a boldness that made her quake when once the words were out.

"Oh — I don't think it can do that," Marcia answered, with a disapproving shake of her pretty head. "Because you know, dearie, healing the sick belonged to Jesus' time."

"But he told his followers to do the works he did," Penelope said insistently. "Don't you remember? he said to heal the sick."

"He didn't mean — well, if he had meant for them *really* to heal the sick, the Church would do it, you know. But what have you been reading, Penny, to make you think of such queer things,

and Commonwealth Avenue and Beacon Street! Oh! What are these?"

"Daffies," said Penelope, relieved by the sudden change in Marcia's look and tone. "Aren't they cunning? Grace says they are little green and yellow heads poking above the blankets to see if it's time to get up."

"Grace is a fanciful girl. Everything will be getting up soon — all the world will be awake. Do I hear a robin?" and Marcia canted her pretty head, listening.

"I saw one in the grove this morning — he sang beautifully." The light in Penelope's face came from another memory than that of the robin.

"Did you? I missed the robin, then. I intended going there, but stopped in the garden. What?" laughingly, as Penelope caught her breath, "should I have surprised the secret? Oh, it is very plain I should; I see it in your face. What a very poor keeper of secrets my little sister is!" and Marcia beat the scrawny little hand she was holding, lightly on her own soft palm. Then a look of pity shot swiftly across her face, as she glanced down upon it, and catching Penelope impulsively in her arms, she added: —

"Poor darling! Marcia loves her. We all love you dearly, Penny!"

Such speeches tried Penny, and had cost her many a bitter tear. Why could they not leave her to understand their devotion, as they left one another; why think it necessary to assure her of it over and over? She did not doubt their love! The tone hurt her as much, if not more, than the words themselves: it implied a great deal that was not said. A shadow swept over her face, and the tears welled up as they always did, and she had a watery vista, over Marcia's shoulder, about whose neck she had flung her arms when Marcia stooped to embrace her, of blue and yellow, where the crocuses grew. The sight recalled her. She remembered the treasure in her pocket, and that God is Love, and all His children perfect; and in the brightness and joy this thought brought, the tears dried. The influx of light-hearted happiness was so swift and sweeping, she laughed softly in sheer delight, which surprised her, for she had not known she was going to laugh; and surprised Marcia, too, who held her off suddenly at arm's length and looked at her. "You rogue," she said, pinching the thin cheek, "you merry rogue! when I thought—"

Marcia did not say what she had thought; but she laughed a little herself, and all in a minute it seemed to Penelope they were as gayly joyous as the bluebirds in the orchard.

"How nice your eyes are," Marcia said, tilting Penelope's head back that she might see into them the better. "They have a lovely expression this morning. Spring must have gotten into them. Perhaps I've been remiss in looking, but I never realized before how very nice they are."

"Are they — really nice?" said Penelope, so eagerly that a spasm as of pain shot across Marcia's telltale face. Somehow she had never suspected Penelope's craving for beauty, or grief over the lack of it before.

"Indeed they are," she said with great earnestness. "They certainly are, Penny."

"I am so glad," Penelope said simply; and Marcia called her a vain pussy, and pretended to be shocked. "Now kiss me, dear," she added, "and tell your own Marcia that you love her."

Penelope could do this without tears, for Marcia made this same demand upon the other members of the family many times each day, as she realized more and more clearly how rapidly the time was approaching when she was to go far away from

her dear old home. There was nothing in the request which singled her out, or made her feel herself an object of pity, and she threw her arms about her sister's neck as she stooped to receive the caress, with a bright little smile that had something about it new in Penelope, which Marcia vaguely felt, and kissed her lovingly on either cheek, and told her she loved her dearly, dearly. Then she thought again of the new light which had come to her, and repeated the first lines of the hymn Love Hathaway had taught her, to herself, only moving her lips as they formed the words, and with a great love swelling in her heart.

"What are you doing, Penny, tapping my shoulder with your chin at such a rate?" laughed Marcia.

"Am I?" said Penelope, taken aback. Then, with a quick resolve to tell Marcia now about Christian Science, and what it could do, she added: "I was saying something—" and repeated the lines. "It is part of a hymn I have learned," she ended.

She expected to be asked for the rest of the hymn, and looked eagerly at Marcia; but Marcia had listened as she would have listened to any other hymn, and said, in a voice not particularly

interested: "It is very pretty. You like committing things, don't you? Sometime," stooping to pick up a flower she had dropped, "perhaps you can say it all to me. How bright they are!" holding the crocuses off as she looked at them. "They're inspiring little things. They make one sure that spring is come."

"So they do," exclaimed Penelope, mentally. "They stand for something I feel — I don't know just what. Something that makes me *know* spring has come to me." Aloud she said, "I shall love crocuses more than ever now." The tone said much more than the words expressed. "They will always be associated in my mind with this glad time," she added.

Marcia looked at her quickly and inquiringly. "Penelope, you are happy, aren't you?" she said.

Penelope nodded a great many times in quick succession. "Crocuses are prophets, aren't they, Marcia?" she said, with a look Marcia did not comprehend.

"Harbingers of spring," she answered, smiling.

"They are true prophets, aren't they? What they promise comes — surely comes?"

"Yes," said Marcia, smiling again. "They are very truthful little friends."

"God is everywhere, isn't He, Marcia?"

"Why — yes," she answered in a changed tone.

"He is good, too — isn't He?"

"Why — yes," she said again. Then she slipped her white fingers beneath Penelope's chin, and tilted the face upward to look into it, as she added, "What strange questions you ask, dearie!" Were they strange, Penelope wondered, scanning Marcia's face. She had not thought of them as being strange. She had come suddenly into the sunshine and gladness of God's love, and it seemed natural to speak of it. But she was vaguely conscious of a difference in talking with Love Hathaway and saying the same words to her sister Marcia. Yet Marcia must know about God. They all knew about God, though they had not known of Christian Science. And Marcia had been Confirmed; so had Helen and Grace. She tried again.

"God never sends sickness and sorrow upon His children," she said earnestly.

Marcia's eyes opened wide at the boldness of this declaration. "Oh," she exclaimed, below her breath. She took Penelope's face between her hands, looking over her head at the rising ground on the opposite side of the river, at which

Love Hathaway had looked while singing. She had wondered many, many times, why their Heavenly Father had found it necessary to inflict this lifelong sorrow upon her little sister. She never doubted but that He had: she mustn't allow Penelope to get a false idea! But how difficult it was to show the Father's hand in the chastisement. She made an effort to vindicate His justice to her own thought as well as to Penelope's. "He does all in mercy, dearie," she said, "to bring us nearer to Himself."

Penelope stared up at the preoccupied face. "Love said wrong punishes itself," she ventured, anxious, yet afraid, to have Marcia heed her words, "for God didn't make wrong. Everything He made is good — and He made everything. God is Love," she added presently, as Marcia had paid no attention to her words.

"So He is!" said she, coming abruptly out of her abstraction, and seizing as eagerly upon the idea as even Penelope could have desired. "We can all cling to that thought."

"And whatever is contrary to the truth, we know can't be true," added Penelope, conclusively.

"Oh," said Marcia, in that whisper of surprise. But she was uncertain how to answer the propo-

sition, so after thinking a minute, she returned upon that statement which seemed safe and strong and good to cling to. "God is Love," she said. "We are sure of this, Penny — the Bible tells us so. And we can know that He is our Father, and pray to Him, and try to be good."

"It seems as though Love must be the only power, doesn't it?" said Penelope.

"Ye-es," she answered doubtfully. Then, brightening: "It is all love underneath, I am sure. But we can't understand these things, Penny; it takes a theologian to answer such questions — and even then they don't seem very plain. Young heads like ours," slipping her arm again over the little misshapen shoulders, "can't hope to solve such problems. It is better to cling to the beautiful thought that God is Love, and let the mysteries alone. Sometime I suppose we shall understand."

They wandered about for a while, hunting for the points of green pushing up, here and there, through the brown mould, and then went down through the orchard, where the bluebirds were singing and flitting about, to the stream. Penelope was hardly satisfied with the result of her effort to make Marcia understand, but she was

too serenely happy in the new light which had broken upon her to be greatly disturbed by it.

"Sometime she will understand," she kept thinking. "When I am *healed*, she will *have* to see!"

She was so frankly joyous that Marcia followed her with wondering eyes.

"What a child of spring you are, Penny!" she said. "I had forgotten you were so fond of it!"

"I feel like the brook," said Penelope, "as though I must rush on, and tell!"

"Tell what?"

"Oh — that spring has come," she answered, and laughed.

Marcia laughed too. "It is fulfilling its mission," she said, "if that is its mission. What a noisy little stream it is — wild with freedom!"

"Its freedom is so new," said Penelope. She thought of her own jubilant heart. "I wonder does everything quiet down as it goes on — do you think so, Marcia?"

Marcia thought so.

Penelope said, "It seems strange to me to think of mamma ever having jumped rope, and things of that sort."

"It seems strange to me sometimes to think

of having done them myself," Marcia said with a mental glance backward. "I am afraid Helen and I were sad romps."

"I mean to learn to do all those things — every one of them!"

Marcia, who was throwing bits of sticks into the water, watching them whirl and eddy with it about the rocks, glanced up, surprised quite as much by the tone as the sentiment. "I mean to," Penelope added, coloring under her gaze. "I thought of it up in the grove. I have always felt what fun it must be; but I've never dared to try doing any of the things myself because — I felt I couldn't." Marcia wondered what had changed her views, and how it was she expected to do the things now she had never been able to do. She dropped a whole navy heedlessly into the water, with no further interest in the righting and sailing away of these tiny barks, and her eyes wandered away toward the meadow, where the water shimmered among the dead grass. "I mean to ride horseback — and everything," said Penelope, stoutly. She understood the compassion in Marcia's face; saw her catch her under lip between her teeth and hastily let it go, and turned her own head aside. But her confidence was in

no way shaken. "Some day she will see I *can* do these things," she thought. "Did you ever hear of the Hathaways, Marcia?" she asked abruptly.

It was a relief to Marcia. "Hathaway," she said, reflecting. "There are no people of the name in this town, so far as I know, but there is that old place — Weehaukn, you know! Hathaways live there. We drive past it now and then — you must have seen it. No? Well — perhaps it is longer than your usual drives. I haven't been by it for a year and more, but I can see just how it looks — oh, so gloomy! When you ride horseback," laughingly, "we'll go over and peep at the place." She was instantly sorry for this careless speech. "How could I have said such a thing!" she thought. But to her surprise there was no evidence in Penelope's face of having been hurt, and she wondered still more. "Why," she added, "what made you think of the Hathaways?"

"Do we know them?"

"Papa does — or did. That was when he was a young man. They went abroad long before mamma was married, and I think she has never met them. I was about Stella's age when they came home, and I remember the stir their arrival

made very well. Everybody was talking about them, and of course I heard a great deal. I always see the place in the light of the impression I got then — that of owls hooting in its desolate towers!" Marcia pretended to shudder.

But Penelope was breathless with interest, and seeing it, Marcia went on: —

"There was a great deal of talk, and I suppose I heard more of it because Hannah had an aunt who had lived with the Hathaways twenty-five or thirty years, and was there when they broke up and went abroad. Hannah was full of reminiscences regarding the place; their former manner of living, and everything. I can hear her now," smiling, with an absent look on her face, "prosing away first to one maid and then to another, and sometimes to Helen and me. I was nine years old and Helen was seven, so we made an easily interested audience. Besides, I've always suspected Hannah of drawing somewhat upon her imagination to make herself more entertaining, particularly when she touched upon the awe-inspiring points. I'll tell you something, Penny, if you won't tell!"

"What?" said Penelope, her face all alight with expectancy.

"The Hathaways had a coachman — he was second coachman, and very young when they went away — who used afterwards to come here to see Hannah. I don't know how I found out, but I did; and I remember Hannah's stories were prefaced quite as frequently with 'Jackson told me,' as with 'Aunt Eunice said,' so I have always fancied Jackson formed a sentimental link with Weehaukn. I suspect also, Penny, that Hannah would be Mrs. Jackson Doubleday, but for a certain little girl we know."

"Do you mean me?" said Penelope, round-eyed with wonder.

Marcia nodded. "But you needn't look sober. Hannah would rather have you, Penny, than all the men in the world."

"But the man," suggested Penelope.

"Oh — he'll do very well. I dare say he's as happy as a clam by this time!"

Penelope did not look convinced, and Marcia, regretting having given this bit of Hannah's personal history, hurried away from the subject. "But to get back to the Hathaways," she said. "They had been gone a long time, and it was felt they might be changed — they were in great grief and bitterness when they went away — so people called;

old friends were waiting and anxious to give them the warmest welcome, but no visits were returned, and everybody was given to understand that they wished and intended to live in the strictest seclusion. The house was not opened — or only a corner of it — and they have lived in that way for ten years and more. It is dreadful! The most doleful sound I have ever heard is the wailing of the wind through the Norway spruces, near the western gate."

"But why do they live in that way? Are you sure they do, Marcia — now?" It was difficult to picture Love Hathaway amid such surroundings.

"Oh, yes, — they'll never change. Nothing, I suppose, could lift them out of that gloom: they fold it about them; they don't want to be happy; their life is one long protest. They lost an only child, Penny — no, not an only child! There is a son who was married at that time, and away from home. But they lost this daughter, and the grief of it broke up their home, and filled them with bitterness and rebellion. I suppose she was a beautiful girl — very beautiful. She had the oddest name — Love."

"Why, I think it is beautiful!"

"I suppose it is, only it is unusual to be spoken of as a — a quality."

"She must have been Love Hathaway."

"Yes, Love Hathaway." Afterward Marcia recalled the expression on Penelope's face as she said "Love Hathaway," and wondered a little over it, and why she had happened to speak of the Hathaways at all, and determined to question her. But before the opportunity to do so offered, the matter had slipped from her mind, and nothing occurred to bring it to her thought again for months.

A day or two previous to this, Mr. Stuart, returning from a canter, had said to his wife as he entered her room: —

"Well, Flora, Weehaukn is open! It looked as bright and pleasant and cheerful as I have ever seen it in my life."

Mrs. Stuart glanced up without much interest, but because she saw he was pleased, said good-naturedly: "I'm sure I'm glad. It is dreadful to think of walling one's self up alive."

But Marcia knew nothing of this.

"Perhaps we'll drive over sometime, Penny, if you would like to," she said. "It is one of the show places — or used to be."

They were standing on the little bridge looking over at the water. As Penelope did not answer, Marcia turned her face toward her questioningly. "Don't you want to?" she asked. "You can hear the wind make such a noise in the trees over there as it never made in any other trees in all the world, I do believe."

Penelope was thinking of Love Hathaway and Thanksgiving. "Sometime, Marcia," she said. "Not right off — in the fall, perhaps." It wasn't pleasant associating that desolate place with Love; and she wished to put off seeing it as long as possible. She would have declined going altogether but for fear of seeming ungrateful to Marcia.

"It is lovely here on murky summer nights," she observed presently, turning her head slowly about as they walked away.

"Penny Stuart," laughed Marcia, "what do you know of murky summer nights and this place?"

"Grace told me. She comes down with Agnes. Agnes always does accommodating things! I don't think she likes to come, but Grace does, and so Agnes comes with her. I have always been afraid; but I shan't be afraid any more. There is nothing to be afraid of. I wish I had always

known there is nothing to be afraid of. I shall come down this summer and see the watchmen."

"See the — what?"

"Don't you know the watchmen?" giggled Penelope, and as Marcia shook her head, gave two or three ecstatic little hops. "Guess, guess," she cried. But Marcia shook her head again. "It is useless to ask me to guess, Penny. I never can guess anything."

"Why, fireflies!" with another giggle. "I guessed the first thing."

"Your sister is very stupid," returned Marcia, delighted with Penelope's light-heartedness, though it mystified her, too. "She never can guess things, and never sees a joke."

"I didn't tell you plainly — the way Grace told me," Penelope said quickly, in a mollifying tone. "Grace said, 'the watchmen kindled their little lamps, and went flitting about in the dark' — you would have guessed that! And you are not stupid. I heard papa say once you had quick intuitions — or something like that."

"Oh, I don't feel badly," smiled Marcia. "There are some pussy-willows!" Penelope ran back to get them, and Marcia walked slowly on through the orchard, pondering in her heart the

change in Penelope. A breeze had sprung up, which swept the few fleecy clouds swiftly across the sky, and swayed and twisted and tossed the gray branches of the old apple trees outlined against the blue, and loosened the little curls about Marcia's forehead and ears, and fluttered her garments, until in her airy lightness and beauty Penelope, panting up behind her, felt she looked like the very spirit of springtime, at whose passing the bare twigs and branches must surely burst into sudden life, and clap their little green hands for very joy.

"I didn't pick them, after all," said Penelope, referring to the pussy-willows. "It seemed too bad to spoil their prospect. They are so patient. I can't help feeling a little sorry for them."

"Sorry?"

"They have to stand there so still, doing the work they ought to have done before they rushed out," said Penelope. "Grace told Stella to take warning from them."

"Poor Stella! Grace is always advising her to take warning from something."

"They are foolish!" Penelope said, considering. "Rushing out pell-mell — that's what Grace said — at the first stir, to see if spring is come.

Then they have to stand and do their work, and wait — and everything else gets ahead of them. It is better to make sure of your position as you go along, isn't it?" with a wise look, and Marcia laughed. "What *has* come over Penny?" she mentally exclaimed. "Grace says it isn't a mite of use to pretend," Penelope went on; "that every bit of work we ought to do will have to be done sometime, and can't be shirked. Grace is very clever, don't you think she is, Marcia?"

Marcia's only answer was a laugh, as she wound her arm about her little sister's shoulders. "I have had a happy morning," she said presently. "I wish, Penny, we might always be like this."

"You always are," with a quick, admiring, upward glance. "And I shall be like this now — only better and better. I have learned something!"

"What have you learned?" said Marcia, with a glance that was somehow startled.

Penelope's breath came quick. "That there is nothing to fear; that God is good; that Love is the only power."

A silence fell between them. Marcia held her little sister very close to her side as they went slowly on over the spongy ground, up among the

gnarled old apple trees, blown by the breezes, the bluebirds darting away before them, filling the air with their song.

They found the crocuses they had left for safety in a garden nook, and Penelope mounted to her room. She had slipped her hand more than once during their rambles into that huge pocket of hers, to touch her "treasure," and now she drew it forth eagerly, and sat down to read. She read until lunch time, and then closed the book with a lingering touch, and a long-drawn breath, almost like a sigh.

"How happy I am!" she murmured. "I wonder if Marcia understood; it seems as though she must — but I don't feel sure. I'm a little distracted," with a laugh; "one minute I think I'll tell them right out, and the next minute I think I won't. It doesn't seem a very easy thing to do, but it will all come out at the right time and in the right way — I am sure of that."

Her eye caught the blue crocuses she had put in a little vase, and she stopped to give them a loving touch.

"You dear things," with grateful cadences in her tone, "I have caught your sweet whisper of hope and promise. I know what you mean — I know — I know."

## CHAPTER III

### TEARS

THE next morning Penelope, with "Science and Health" in her pocket, was slipping out through the hall door *en route* for the pine grove, where she intended spending the whole forenoon, when Marcia called her. She turned back, smiling, and stood expectantly, holding the door ajar, as Marcia tripped down the stairs. A breeze, sweet with that early springtime fragrance, wandered in, and Marcia sniffed delightedly.

"Open it wide, Penny," she called, and Penelope, laughing, swung the door open.

"Isn't it lovely?" she said.

"Delicious," Marcia answered. "Perfectly delicious. Mamma is asking for you, Penny."

"Oh," said Penelope, a trifle disappointed. "But perhaps it will be only a minute," she thought. "Where is mamma, Marcia? Do you know what she wants?"

"In the blue room. The dresses and hats have come, and mamma wants us all there to look at them and try them on," said Marcia, on the threshold, slowly lifting herself upon her toes and settling back again — up and down, up and down, as she drew in deep breaths of the sweet morning air. It was warmer than it had been; she was conscious of a distinct change from the day before. Spring seemed to have grasped the reins of government, and to be wielding the sceptre with sudden assurance. Still gently rising and falling, with appreciative eyes wandering about, she became suddenly conscious of an ominous silence, and faced about. "Why, Penny!" she exclaimed. "What is the trouble? Surely you want to see your new things!"

Penelope shook her head. The brightness was quenched which had been in her face a minute before. "Can't I wait?" she pleaded. "Won't you go, Marcia, and ask mamma if I may please wait?"

"Why, dearie," Marcia began, but the remonstrance died on her lips. It was the family habit to indulge Penelope; seldom in her life had she been denied any request she made. Still their mother was waiting, and she wished Penelope

to come to her. Divided between the desire to gratify Penelope, and the fear that doing so might displease their mother, she waited irresolutely, looking very pretty in her perplexity, as she stood in her youthful grace, framed by the wide doorway. Suddenly she took a cajoling tone. "You want to see your dresses! Of course you do! You can't think how pretty they are! You can go out afterwards — it won't take long," she added as an afterthought.

"I know how they look," said Penelope, faintly. All her dresses looked alike; were all made after the one unvarying model. Long ago she had overheard Marcia suggest to her mother a change in the monotonous little frocks, and her mother had answered in a very low tone, but not so low but that Penelope's sharp ears caught the words, "I think this style best hides the deformity, don't you?" and Marcia had made no answer. The memory of the words always made her shudder. She longed unutterably for a change in her dresses, but nothing would have induced her even to hint at her desire.

"Why, why, why!" said Marcia, with a pretty pretence of being shocked. "And you haven't seen them! I know how pretty they are, for I

helped mamma unpack the boxes. The dash of tan in the brown one makes it lovely! It is prettier made up than it was in the piece even, and we all liked it then. Don't you remember how pretty Grace thought it was — and nobody questions her taste."

Penelope wanted to say she was tired of "dashes of tan," but she lacked the hardihood, and after waiting a minute for her to speak, Marcia went on in an elaborate tone: "Then the white ones! You always like white, Penny — so do I. And such a number! Seven — just think of it! The room seemed quite filled up with one little girl's dresses."

But Penelope did not brighten, and Marcia, stepping out from the frame, took the child's chin in that tender way she had, and tilted the thin face upward. She did not look into it long; but without releasing the chin, turned her own face, with a deepening shadow on it, to the outer sunshine. Penelope studied the pretty profile; she saw the trouble, and was sorry to have caused it; still, she so dreaded seeing those dull little dresses of hers in the presence of the family, making a business of looking them over in the midst of the bright, light, springtime dresses of all the rest, that even

to make Marcia happy she could not bring herself to say she was ready to go. There was a shimmer of unshed tears in her eyes. "Won't you ask mamma to let me wait?" she begged. "I will see them sometime with only you; or with you and mamma. But not with all the rest — I don't want to see them with all the rest!"

Marcia did not look at her, but slipping an arm over the little shoulders, held her close to her side. The sunshine fell in a flood about them, a robin flew into an elm tree, and swaying there against the blue, sang as though his little heart would burst with the joy that filled it. The song should have recalled to Penelope the robin she had seen in the grove on yesterday's happy morning, and the memory of what had brought the happiness. But it did not. The cloud which had entered the atmosphere of her gladness had obscured the light for the time. "Mamma won't mind if you ask," she added.

"But, Penny, I think she will!" Then in a reasoning tone, "You want to please mamma — I know you do! And, dearie, there are lovely tan ribbons on the brown dress, just the shade of the dash of tan in the material. How can you help wishing to see it?"

Why would Marcia make so much of that "dash of tan," as though it were a novelty too. There was a very decided "dash" of the color in the brown dress she had on, and had been in its predecessor. Her thoughts ran back over the wearying procession of these little brown frocks stretching as far into the past as she could remember noticing such things, with only "dashes" of something here and there along the line to relieve the monotony. "I hate brown," she said suddenly.

"Penny Stuart!" said Marcia, laughing outright. In her life she had never heard Penelope speak like that before. But it was a relief to hear her, and she gave her an impulsive little shake, as she laughed again. But Penelope's cheeks had flushed.

"I didn't mean to say that," she said regretfully. "Don't tell it, will you, Marcia? But I don't believe brown is any less conspicuous than some other colors — like blue — *dark* blue — do you?"

Marcia looked down upon her quickly and inquiringly. She wondered when and where and how Penelope had become possessed of the idea that she wore brown because it was not a conspicuous color. Penelope could not have told, herself; but she was familiar with the fact, and seemed to have had this knowledge all her life.

"Brown is a pretty color," said Marcia, soothingly. Penelope would have preferred canary, or purple, or crimson, or orange, or red, but she kept this shocking fact to herself. She was hungry, poor child, for the bright things she had never been able to wear, but which she saw in such profusion all about her. Marcia watched her furtively. "Well, you like white," she said after a minute, brightly.

"Yes — I like white."

"And the season for white is right at hand," added Marcia, cheerfully, "and seven new white dresses waiting to be worn!"

"I'm sorry I said what I did about brown," Penelope said again. "But I do get so tired of it sometimes."

"That's a pity! because you look so well in it! We all have some color in which we look our best. Grace is never so pretty in anything as she is in blue — and think how much she wears it! French women, Penny, make a point of finding out what color is most becoming to them, and then stick to it."

Penelope thought the French women were very foolish, but she did not say so. Neither did she say, though she thought this also, that Grace wore

blue because it was becoming, and she liked it; while she wore brown because it was as well for her as any color, and had the advantage of being quiet and unobtrusive. "You look pretty in any color," she said with an upward glance.

"Oh, you little flatterer!" cried Marcia, administering a series of pats to the thin, sallow cheek, as she drew her impulsively to her with that encircling arm. The tone was bright enough, but there was a tearful expression on the face she held suddenly so that Penelope could not see it. "Were you going up to the grove?" she added presently, still patting Penelope's cheek at intervals, with the white fingers pressed upon it. "I will go with you, if you would like to have me, after we have seen the things. Or," with an unspeakable pity for the deformed girl, into whose heart she had had so clear a glimpse, welling up suddenly, "if you really don't want to see them just now, dearie, I'll ask mamma if you may wait."

Before Penelope could speak, Mrs. Stuart's voice was heard from the next landing, saying in a half querulous intonation: —

"Where *is* Marcia, and what *has* become of Penelope?"

The two figures in the sunshine separated in-

stantly. "I have been a long time," said Marcia. She looked inquiringly at Penelope, and Penelope nodding, followed heavily up the stairs, with "Science and Health" bumping suggestively against her knee. But she was used to the bumping of a heavy pocket, and the ordeal before her so magnified itself she could think of nothing else. It seemed for the time to be all there was. A confusion of voices issued from the blue room. Marcia laughed. "What a babel!" said she.

"I guess they like their things," Penelope said with an effort and an additional heart-sinking.

"I guess they do. Hear them — hear Grace!"

As they appeared in the doorway Helen spied them. "Oh, here they are!" said she. "Come here, Penny, and see your new hat! Isn't it pretty?" twirling it about on her hand, and looking expectantly at Penelope. "I like it so much. Deft fingers tied these bows — see! Aren't they graceful?"

Penelope's smile was rather a failure, and Helen's dark eyes sought Marcia's inquiringly.

"I think it is very pretty," Marcia said, avoiding Helen's eyes.

Such a poor brown sparrow of a hat it looked, among a flock of bluebirds and orioles and scarlet

tanagers! Penelope tried not to show she was conscious of this, and looked bravely into Helen's face, as she went on, with a little less confidence, though still insistently: —

"I knew you must like it! How can you help it? It looks just like you, dearie." She glanced at Marcia again for enlightenment; it was evident something was amiss with Penelope. She was taller than Marcia, and darker, and a certain composure of manner gave strangers the impression she was older. As Marcia could not or would not understand her appeal, she looked down thoughtfully at the hat she still held upon one hand, lightly fingering the ribbon bows, and said, with a glance at Penelope, "I like these tan shades on this brownish straw."

Penelope's quick eye had caught and rightly interpreted the look on Helen's face, and with an heroic effort to disabuse her mind of the impression that she was troubled or unhappy, smiled up suddenly into her face.

"Well, I am glad," said Helen, in a relieved tone. "I really was afraid, Penny, that you didn't like it."

"It is a lovely straw," said Grace. Grace the blue-eyed, the golden-haired, of whom Love

Hathaway had so strongly reminded Penelope. She was very tall; her eyes were on a level with Helen's, as they looked at one another over the poor brown hat. "I think it is as pretty a braid as I have ever seen."

Helen gave her a grateful look. "Yes, I think it is," she said.

"The shape is nice, too — for Penny," Stella said with a matronly air, and Grace opened her blue eyes mockingly.

"Why, yes, mother," she rejoined, "I think you are right."

Stella's small chin tilted upward. "I know what you mean," she said, "but I don't mind. I'm not a baby — and I can think things, if I am only nine years old."

"As though anybody doubted it!"

Helen shook her placid head. "Now please stop sparring," she said, "and attend while Penny tries on her hat. Agnes tried it on, and it looked very well, but of course it will look better on you, because it was made for you. What?" meeting the objection in Penelope's face. "Not try it on? We have all tried ours on; we waited a while, but you were so long. I'm — I'm afraid you don't like it if you're not willing to try it on."

"It's a lovely straw," Grace said again.

"A fine quality of ribbon," and Helen touched it lightly with her long white fingers.

Agnes said: —

"It is an odd shape, and that is in its favor. I like to have a hat unlike any other hat in town."

"See the dear little bow the lining is tied with!" Stella exclaimed admiringly.

Penelope understood very well why they made so much of her quiet-looking hat: why all the others, gay with flowers, were laid aside, while the owners crowded about her own, eager to point out every good point the plain little thing possessed: why they made so much of all her small personal belongings, and talents — understood, perhaps better than they understood themselves, that they made so much of these things in the hope of lessening in this way the sense she must have of her many deprivations. And though she loved them dearly, and was grateful, with all her grateful heart, for their tenderness and consideration, it hurt her keenly, too, for it emphasized, and riveted upon her memory, the fact that they were holding ever in their consciousness the thought of the difference there was between herself and them.

"I don't like trying on hats," she said, with a feeble attempt to smile.

Helen twirled the brown hat slowly on her fingers, and looked at Grace. "It is enough if Agnes has tried it on," Penelope resumed coaxingly. "Don't ask me to. It is all right! I like it — at least —" her eyes dropped.

Nothing was said for a moment; then Grace broke the rather awkward silence. "I wish Miss Dow hadn't put the brown ribbon in!" she frowned, "it darkens it so." She regretted having made this unfavorable comment, and took her red lips between her teeth in instant vexation. Penelope caught the action, and understood. It was always this way; they never felt free, she knew, to express themselves clearly in her presence; they were so anxious to screen her from unnecessary pain. At times she resented such treatment hotly in her heart. She did so now.

Helen said: —

"I thought the brown seemed just the thing! It blends the tan shades with the hat, doesn't it? But you know better than I. You can always tell exactly how a thing ought to be — and I can't. Couldn't you take it out?"

"You might spoil the bows," objected Marcia.

"Oh, I wouldn't meddle with it myself — only — "

"Try it on, Penny," Helen said coaxingly. "Let's settle this question of brown. Let me put it on for you," and Penelope, doubly contrite, now that she found Helen had been quite sincere in her praises, stood motionless to have the hat placed upon her head. "If they wouldn't pet me so — if they could only feel I can bear something, I should have no reason to suspect them of deceiving me," she kept thinking. She was so sorry for that little flash of resentment, so sure she had wronged them, and so remorseful for having misjudged them even in the slightest thought, that she had some ado to keep the tears back; and when Helen said, "There," in a satisfied tone, and marched her up to the long mirror, tried hard to nod and smile and look satisfied too.

"Isn't it pretty? Don't you like it?" demanded Helen. Penelope rather overdid it with her nods and smiles, in the effort to make amends for the injustice of which she felt she had been guilty, and a faint surprise came into Helen's quiet face. She glanced around: "What is the verdict?" she said. "What do you think of it?"

"Fine!"

"Suits her to perfection."

"Penny always looks well in brown."

"The prettiest hat she ever had."

Penelope could see their faces in the mirror, and her eyes turned from one reflection to another as these sentiments were expressed; but she made no other sign or motion.

The hat was pretty for its kind; the fault was with the kind. Its unlikeness to the rest was what called for apology. They began again to make excuses for it, without knowing they were doing so, and Penelope, still facing the glass, followed them listlessly with her eyes, wishing they would stop talking and put the hat away. But she was ready with a quick smile whenever she met their glances in the mirror, and brightened with real interest when Grace said, in her quick, eager way: —

"Now this is what I meant — " She broke off suddenly and whirled around. "Mamma," she exclaimed, impetuously, "why can't Penny have flowers to lighten it up? I saw some light blue ones at Miss Dow's the day we were there — hyacinths. I think they would be lovely!"

The girls all looked at their mother. Penelope could see her in the glass. Mrs. Stuart turned

questioningly to Marcia, who nodded eager encouragement. But in spite of this expression of warm approval on Marcia's part, a doubt of the wisdom of the thing came into Mrs. Stuart's face, and as Penelope watched it grow and strengthen, the hope which had sprung up in her heart died slowly but steadily out. It seemed long, after she had known what the answer would be, before her mother said, hesitatingly: —

"Do you think it is well to change Miss Dow's work — or ask her to change it? She — understands Penny so well; and has been — much more successful than any one else."

"She might improve upon her own good work," said Grace. "Now see, mamma," snatching some blue stuff from the table, and fashioning it deftly as she spoke, "this is what I mean." She stood behind Penelope, her pretty face and golden hair showing above, and in sharp contrast with the weazen, shrinking face of the deformed girl, as she lightly tucked the blue among the trimming of the hat. "Oh, I wish," breaking off suddenly, and whirling around again, "you would let me take the hat back, and superintend the changes! I would take the brown out altogether, and put cream white in its place. Cream white

with those rich shades of tan would be lovely! then the blue hyacinths — look! There is no reason, you see, why Penny shouldn't wear pale blue — none in the world. It's sweet, I think."

Penelope, standing patiently while Grace illustrated with the gauzy stuff the changes she would made in the brown-sparrow hat, which would bring it more into harmony with the gay birds among which it must flock, glanced about wistfully at the faces she could see in the glass, to glean from them Grace's chances for carrying the day. She had no great hope, however, that she would do so; there was a shadow on her mother's face she well understood.

"Wouldn't it be prettier?" demanded Grace.

"Much," Helen returned, with more enthusiasm than she usually evinced. "I can see that it would be a very great improvement."

"I think so," said Stella.

"Do let Penny have the flowers," Agnes pleaded. "Mamma, do let Penny have the flowers."

Mrs. Stuart and Marcia whispered together. Penelope saw her mother slightly shake her head; and Marcia's eager face fell.

"Well, ask Penny," Mrs. Stuart finally said in

an irritated tone, loud enough for them all to hear distinctly. "*I* think she is better satisfied as it is. Miss Dow makes her nice hats — and I am sure she has always liked them. We all have. It seems better to me *not* to change it — but ask Penny."

Then there was a sudden silence. The girls looked blankly at one another, or at the floor; the corners of Penelope's mouth twitched downward. The lady, whose tear of pity had sent Penelope weeping to the grove only the morning before, approaching Grace, whispered — she did not know what sharp ears Penelope had, or she certainly would not have done this — "It is less conspicuous, dear, as it is. This is what your mother thinks. It is better — it is kinder not to draw attention to — what we all deplore."

"I don't want it changed," Penelope cried out sharply, snatching the hat from her head. "Please don't *talk* about changing it any more."

The great clock in the hall ticked solemnly in the uncomfortable silence. Helen took the hat helplessly and looked at Grace; Grace looked at Marcia; and Marcia came to comfort.

"It shall be just as you wish, dearie," she said, with little consoling pats upon the poor shoulders. "It is pretty as it is; we all think so." Then,

with an effort at pleasantry: "You know what I told you about Grace and blue? She is aggressive — trying to plant her colors on foreign shores!"

Penelope's laugh was short and shrill. She had a suffocating feeling, and swallowed suddenly. She wished this friend of her mother would go away; that she had never come to visit them. Her lips curled piteously.

"I'm glad people know my colors," Grace said, after so long an interval the remark seemed irrelevant.

"I never can think how to comfort people," she complained later on to Helen; "the knack was omitted from my fit-out, and it's no use to try. All I can do is to stand and stare, like a great dumb idol, when I'm just longing to say something that's got a grain of sense and a bit of the cheering power. But I'll tell you one thing! I believe Penny thinks we coddle her because we pity her; and it hurts her. I'm sure of it! And I'll never do it again."

Agnes pulled Stella out of the room. Stella looked back with round eyes of wonder at the group in front of the mirror. She could not understand why Penelope had snatched off her hat in that way; nor why they all seemed so un-

comfortable. But Agnes pressed her finger upon her own lips and shook her head, and Stella, accustomed to follow Agnes, was led out of the way of temptation before she had been able to speak a word.

Mrs. Stuart, in an aimless fashion, folded and unfolded Penelope's dresses, sending furtive glances in her direction, as she said to herself over and over: "It's better, it's better, it's better." Her face was full of trouble, but she was sustained by the conviction of having done her duty, and of being right in the course she had pursued. "Perhaps she is a little disappointed now — I'm afraid she is," watching and catching fragments of the talk about Penelope. It was not of an enlivening nature; its dull, forced character smote her heart. "She wouldn't have thought of it," with sudden vexation, "but for Grace! She put the notion into her head — then Marcia must join forces with Grace. Why," impatiently, "can't they talk a little more brightly, and not let her feel they know she is disappointed?" She sighed heavily. "I hope she won't begin longing for the things the others have. If she does, what shall I do? But I couldn't permit it," nervously. "I never can dress her in a way that would attract attention —

it wouldn't be right!" It irritated her that Grace's laugh hadn't the genuine ring. She took a dress up and laid it down, and took it up again and laid it down. "Penny," she said, with sudden decision, holding up the white frock and struggling to be natural and bright, "you haven't seen these."

"It is pretty," Penelope returned, with a flickering smile. Then she made a great effort. "I like white, mamma. It is very pretty."

"There," thought Mrs. Stuart, relieved. "She will see I am right about the hat, too, as soon as she has had time to think it over. She has always been a sensible little thing. I'll tell Grace not to meddle again." To Penelope she said: "They are pretty, dear — seven of them! Will seven white dresses do you this summer, do you think?"

The tone was so kind, the look on her mother's face so eager, so anxious to have her pleased, to feel that she was pleased, it touched Penelope's tender heart. She made an extra effort to be cheerful, and succeeded, to the deceiving of her mother. "Just a puff of disappointment, that is all," she thought. "It is gone, and what a load is taken off my mind!" She mentally resolved that in future there should be some better arrangement

in the matter of the arrival of the hats — less chance for comparison. "She is getting older," she thought with a twinge, "and it is just possible she feels the difference, without being able to discriminate."

It was unspeakable relief to Penelope when Delia appeared with cards. Mrs. Stuart welcomed the diversion. "Mrs. Selfridge," she said happily, "and Rosamond with Miss Emery. We must all go down," with a glance around, and a second glance at Penelope.

Penelope was fingering one of the white dresses in an absent-minded fashion, listening for the last foot upon the stairs, when Marcia put her head in at the door for the second time, to remind her that they would go to the grove together by and by, and to waft her another kiss. "Sure you won't come down?" she said.

Penelope nodded, and Marcia went slowly away. Then Penelope crept close to the door and listened intently; the hands hanging at her sides clenched till the knuckles showed in white spots, and her lip caught between her teeth in her effort to keep from crying. It was more difficult now that the incentive to do so was removed and there were no eyes to see and no one to be pained by the

sight, nor enlightened by the tears as to the heavy burden on her heart. When the last footsteps on the stairs had died away some minutes, she went out and leaned over the balustrade. How pleasant the voices sounded! She could hear Rosamond's clear, sweet tones distinctly. She was fond of Rosamond Selfridge, who was Helen's intimate friend, but she had not cared to see her this morning; she did not care to see any one. It was not disappointment over the hat that made her breath come in catches; the hurt was much deeper. The face of her mother's friend kept rising before her, and the words "that which we all deplore" rang in her memory. A sob, taking her by surprise, shook her from head to foot. She had a forlorn sense of isolation, as she stood there, hearing the pleasant voices below; of being cut off by her misfortune from all that was bright and cheery in the world.

There was a little room, approached by a narrow passage opening from the back hall, and known in the family as the "dark room," to which Penelope sometimes retired when the necessity to cry was strong upon her, and in which she intended taking refuge now, as soon as she was certain that she would not be called or looked

for. The room had no window, but a flight of narrow stairs, leading to an attic choked with relics of many generations of Stuarts, admitted sufficient light for Penelope's purposes. She had a friendly feeling for this little room, it received her so quietly, shut her in from sight and sound, and kept her secret too. No one ever dreamed of seeking Penelope in the "dark room."

Sure at last that Marcia was not coming back again, she looked about for other sharp eyes, and then by the usual peeping, tiptoeing, stealthy stages, reached the narrow passage opening from the back hall. The necessity for caution, the strained attention which her progress demanded, pushed her grief into the background for the nonce, but the instant the hall door was softly closed behind her, it rushed upon her with overwhelming force, and half running along the passage in her eagerness to reach the little dark room, tear-blinded, whimpering, she clutched the door, swung it after her, and all in a moment was a little moaning heap upon the floor.

## CHAPTER IV

### A BOW IN THE CLOUD

"Oh, oh, oh," sobbed Penelope, when the first wild paroxysm had spent itself and in the comparative lull she faced the miseries of her lot, "why must it be — why should I have to bear it — I can't, I can't, I can't!"

There was another period of bitter weeping; then she burst out in sudden rebellion: "It is cruel I should have to — cruel! O dear, dear, dear, what shall I do — what shall I do?"

There was no answer to this question, and with a sense of helplessness, the great burden of her life pressing sorely upon her, she settled down upon the floor again, bowed over, with her face in her hands, and cried and cried. But the storm had spent itself; the tears came more gently, and gradually she grew quieter, crying only in little gusts, at lengthening intervals, and with less and less bitterness. Then her mood shifted into one of self-pity.

A forlorn little object she looked in the dim light, sitting upon the floor, her face swollen and tear-stained, her straggling hair falling in disorderly fashion about her brow and ears. Penelope's fits of violent weeping always ended in this way, and then merged into a state of regret over her wrong-doing and rebellion.

"I'm so sorry," said she, her lips quivering again, but with contrition this time. "I don't mean to be wicked — only it is so hard to be good sometimes."

At the remembrance of how hard it was, the tears, always so near the surface, overflowed, and coursed down her poor, thin cheeks. They were gentle, however, as the softest summer shower, and the great sobs which shook her now and then, taking her generally by surprise, had a subtle quality about them, akin to comfort.

Then she got upon her knees, and prayed that God would forgive her for being so wicked, — she didn't mean to be wicked, — she would try and never be wicked again. She was sorry for what she had done; and would He be pleased to give her a good and patient heart — and keep her from minding so much — and make her grateful for all the blessings He had bestowed upon her — her home, her dear father and mother and sisters,

with all their wealth of love for her — and keep her from ever again being so rebellious; but make her gentle and submissive to His will. But would He, out of His great love, — He, the all-powerful God, — would He, if it could be His will, lift the burden from her life; the sorrow from her heart. Would He, for Christ's dear sake, have pity upon her, and make her straight.

Penelope had small expectation of receiving that for which she had asked, beyond the good and patient heart — that might be given. She had offered the same petitions for so many years without avail, it was hardly strange she looked with no degree of confidence for an answer to her prayers. But praying had a soothing effect upon her, and she was greatly comforted.

Then she argued the matter a little. "She was only thirteen — she wouldn't be fourteen until next month — children grew after they were fourteen. Why shouldn't she grow? Stella was only nine — and Stella was the taller."

There seemed an injustice in this which very nearly brought the tears to Penelope's eyes again, but she remembered the "good and patient heart" she had asked for, and choked them back. Then she thought of a story a well-meaning, but not

overwise woman had once given her to read. The deformed hero of that story was not rebellious, she could not remember he had even prayed to be made straight; and his life had been beautiful. But deep down in her own heart she feared there was rebellion — more than feared it. A consciousness she dared not face was always whispering that she would not be deformed if she could help herself — no, though all the world united in the assurance that it was her Heavenly Father's will. The rebellious suggestion stirred in her heart now, and she turned from it with a moral shudder. It was a dreadful sin in Penelope's sight to rebel against God's will; did not the Catechism teach her that her "duty toward God is to believe in Him, to fear Him, and to love Him" with all her heart? And how could she love Him with all her heart, not loving His will?

"But I don't know that it *is* His will," she burst out passionately. Then, instantly, with a hushed explosion of the sound: "Why!" she exclaimed, sitting back upon her feet, with her clasped hands falling limply before her, "I've been forgetting about God! I've been — forgetting — about — God."

The atmosphere cleared instantly, but it was

some minutes before she recovered from her surprise — the surprise of having forgotten she had "Science and Health" in her pocket; and that God is Love, and sends no evil upon His children. "How could I!" she exclaimed, in self-reproachful tones. "But I have only had 'Science and Health' twenty-four hours, and I have had this belief all my life," thought Penelope. "I'm used to doing this way." It wasn't so strange, perhaps, that she had fallen back into the old habit; but she made a very earnest resolution not to do it again. "It is only a belief," with mental emphasis. "It is error!" She had caught Love Hathaway's phrases. They had had a strange sound in her ears, which in itself tended to fix them; but in her ardent desire to understand, and the earnestness with which she had caught at the hope of deliverance, lay the real secret of the force with which they had fastened upon her memory. "It is error," she said again. "I am God's perfect child. I am God's perfect child."

That she could have forgotten it for a moment filled her with amazement. "How did it come about?" She slipped her hand into her pocket, and drew forth "Science and Health,"

and holding it, still resting back upon her feet, a shaft of pale light from the attic stairway slanting over her, pondered this question for a moment. A row of discarded family garments hung against the wall, and her eyes roved among them, as half expecting she might find the answer there. There was a friendliness about these garments that Penelope valued — a sort of companionship — she would have missed them had they been taken away. They gave her a feeling that those with whom they were associated in her mind were, in this mute, unobtrusive fashion, still surrounding her in her solitude with their love and sympathy. But she found no reason among them, or elsewhere, why she should have forgotten.

"There is none," she said suddenly. "And no excuse. I have been going on just exactly as though I knew nothing more this morning than I knew day before yesterday, and with 'Science and Health' in my pocket — and knowing what I know!" But it was no use dwelling on this phase of the matter. She lifted "Science and Health," and bending her head over it intently studied the design of the cross and crown upon the cover.

"Not that sort of a cross, though," she said aloud, following out a train of thought the gold cross had suggested. "God never made deformity and put it upon any one to bear. God is good." Love Hathaway had told her that God sees *all there is* to see; that He knows *all there is* to know. "But he doesn't see *that*," said Penelope. "He doesn't know that. The Bible says God saw everything He had made — and it was good. Deformity isn't good, and He didn't make it. Deformity is error."

With "Science and Health" in her hand, she climbed the steep, narrow stairs to the attic, where there was light from a window in the roof, and sitting upon the floor, opened the book at the preface. "Now I am beginning to 'read it regularly,'" she cried, with a brisk little air, "and in course. It is lovely having a dear little ribbon marker — and I am glad it is red." She pulled the bright, narrow ribbon through and through her fingers absently. She was thinking of her hat. "I had just as soon it would be brown as not," she soliloquized. "I don't care one bit. Sometime it will be different. Knowing what I know makes me feel — superior. I don't even mind what Mrs. Wright

[her mother's friend] said." And to test the truth of this, she repeated, as nearly as she could recall them, the words which had hurt her so keenly when she overheard them. "It is kinder not to draw attention to — what we all deplore," and waited, with her eyes cast up to the rafters, for anything in the way of pain or shame that might be hovering about to settle upon her, and when nothing of the kind transpired, laughed a little, adding, "I knew it wouldn't," and began to read.

She read for a long time, and with a deep breath of content, closed the book, with a finger between the pages, and looked about at the dusty old furniture and boxes. She was thinking of the Christian Science Practitioner Love had spoken of, and of her promise to interest Marcia. "Divine Love may open the way for me to be healed before winter," she mused, seating herself upon a flat, hair-covered trunk which had been her great-grandmother's, with staring initials in brass-headed nails upon its top. She touched each nail, following out the letters with her finger as she pondered. "But it won't be long until winter, even if I have to wait till then," she said cheerfully, "and I shall know all the time that I am

God's perfect child — and always have been! So if I don't have a healer at once, it won't matter: I know the truth. I know I am God's perfect child — that is the teaching of this precious book; it is in the Bible, too! I can see it plain enough, from the little I have read in 'Science and Health.'" She touched the cover lovingly. The certainty that all was right and perfect at that moment gave her a wonderful willingness to wait; she had no sense of anxiety or hurry. "Winter was not far off."

The attic was stuffy, and by patient effort she managed to push up the skylight and let in the sweet, fresh air. She could not see out, but she could see the blue sky and hear the robins and the bluebirds in the orchard. How happy it sounded! "Everything is beautiful, really," thought Penelope. "Things unlike God can have no real existence."

She sat down again, and learned "the scientific statement of being." Then she turned back to the red ribbon mark, and began to read. She lost all thought of time; hungry and thirsty, she was feasting at the table newly spread for her in the wilderness of her life.

The family had become greatly alarmed over

her absence; the whole household were engaged in the search. The grove, the orchard, the banks of the stream, the garden, summer houses, and every inhabited room in the house, had been explored in vain. Mrs. Stuart was distracted. She had sent them all hither and thither, to search again every nook and corner of the grounds and the grove, and had followed herself, when Penelope, unconscious of the tumult she had occasioned, trotted into the hall, with a light in her face that made Marcia — on her way out after a last fruitless scouring of the house, and who had begun to say reproachfully, "Where *have* you been?" — change the question for the form of expression she had used on that morning when Penelope came singing from the grove, and say instead, "Penny Stuart! What has happened to you?"

"Happened?" echoed Penelope, looking wistfully at Marcia, with something so sweet and earnest and hopeful in her face, it held Marcia's eyes, and made her forget how anxious she had made them all. "How happy you look, sweetheart!" she said, with a puzzling remembrance of the little face as she had seen it in the blue room. "Is it that secret again? I do believe it is."

Penelope nodded. "Yes, yes. But it isn't a

secret — only I don't know just how to tell it. You will know some day!" brightly. "I don't know just when you will know — but you will know."

"And I am not to pry. Well, I don't want to — I like the prospect of a great surprise. But, dearie, if your secret is going to take you off in this way, please put up a notice 'back at so and so' — or something like that. We have been in a perfect frenzy for an hour and more. Mamma — but never mind, dearie," as the little face fell; she could not endure seeing the brightness slip out of it. "It is all right now you are found; but naturally we were anxious. Let's 'sound the tocsin' so every one may know you are here — they are all out hunting for you."

She turned laughingly to the chimes, hanging halfway up the broad staircase, and had reached her white hand for the little mallet with which to strike the signal, when Penelope's next remark arrested the light action, and drove the smile from her face.

"Does God," said Penelope, "answer prayer?"

Marcia's arm dropped to her side. "Penny, what a question!" said she, with an amazed look. "Why, of course He does!"

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. Why, Penny, of course I'm sure." Then, in a tone of slight rebuke, "You mustn't ask doubting questions, dearie."

Generally such a reproof would have silenced Penelope completely; but there was a point in her mind she was very anxious to have settled, and after a little hesitation, she ventured, in a timid, apologetic way: —

"I don't mean to ask doubting questions, Marcia. Only — I wanted to know if you really think God *does* answer prayers."

"Yes. I think He does."

"Like what?"

"Well," said Marcia, considering. Then brightening suddenly: "Don't we pray, every Sunday in church, to be delivered from battle and murder and from sudden death — and *aren't* we delivered?"

"Ye-es," Penelope agreed, hesitatingly. She was not satisfied.

"Marcia," she said, her serious eyes fixed on the sweet face looking down upon her over the banister, "did you ever ask for anything in particular — and get it?"

"Why, Penny dear, I — I don't believe I have. I've never had to ask for things — except, of course, to be made good, and that depends on myself in

a way, you know — I must use the grace that is given. And I'm afraid I'm not — I know I'm not as good as I ought to be," said Marcia, looking pensive, with the easy penitence of untried hearts. "But as to other things — they have just come to me, Penny, without asking. I have never thought about it, I'm afraid. I have taken life as I have found it — so full and rich and bright that there has been nothing to ask for."

Penelope nodded. She could understand this. "I expect that is the way it ought to be," said she, thoughtfully, "with all of us. Papa doesn't have to be importuned to give us things."

"You poor darling," said Marcia, impulsively. Her tone was low, and she choked back the tears which very nearly welled up to her eyes, for she caught a glimpse of something in Penelope's thought which made her own heart ache. It was then that it flashed upon her, had Penelope, like some one she had read of in the Bible, been praying that the "thorn in the flesh" might be removed? And had she, like that great saint, received for answer, not the removal of the thorn, but grace to bear the cross? "Dear Penny," said Marcia, in her heart, "poor dear, dear little sister!" She had another battle with the tears,

but she kept them back. This, then, was perhaps the secret of that new light in her face — the love and joy and peace which come from God. "Oh, you poor, dear, darling pet," she thought again. Then she said earnestly: —

"Penny, God does answer prayer."

Penelope looked up quickly. There was such compassion in Marcia's beautiful eyes, such a tenderness overshadowing her sweet face, that Penelope caught her breath. She thought of a picture she had once seen of a beautiful angel standing in some such attitude; and the light which streamed down upon Marcia, through a stained-glass window, reminded her of the brightness about that angel form. "How lovely you are!" she said, in a low, rapt tone.

Marcia hardly noticed the remark. "Penny," she said again, "God does answer prayer."

"Yes, I think He does," Penelope returned, a note of conviction in her voice. "I think that is what it means. But we don't always know the answers for answers. Sometimes we think they are something else, I expect. Just happenings."

Marcia looked puzzled. She but faintly divined Penelope's heartaches over physical deformity, and the passionate reaching out for that which

had come to the rest freely. With sudden illumination she presently said: —

"We know, Penny, that whatever is good comes from God."

Penelope nodded, smiling.

"For God is good," said Marcia, reverently, as though she were in church.

Penelope nodded again.

"God is Love — the Bible says so."

"Yes, God is Love. That is the first verse I ever learned. Hannah taught it to me — God is Love."

"And no appeal to Him," said Marcia, "can go unnoticed. It must meet with a response — else He wouldn't be Love."

Penelope, looking up at her, nodded again as she said, soft and low, "Yes, that is it." Then she went on musingly, taught by what she had read in "Science and Health": "God made everything beautiful, didn't He, Marcia? Only we don't see things just as they are."

Marcia's sweet eyes opened their widest. "Well, Penny, you know — " she began doubtfully. A passage of scripture flashed into her mind, and after a thoughtful minute, she added, "The Bible does say God created man in His

own image, doesn't it? I never thought before what that might mean — it's a little puzzling. But then the Bible is puzzling; we can't expect to understand it, of course. It says, too, you know, that God made everything — and then said it was good!" The contradiction between this statement and the actual condition of things was expressed in the lift of Marcia's eyebrows. "But God is Love," she added gently; "the Bible tells us so. And He is good — the infinite, all-powerful God, and we need not be afraid to trust Him."

"Why, that is just it!" exclaimed Penelope, clutching at this opportunity. "You've said it right out! That God is infinite good — don't you begin to see how it is?"

"See how what is?"

"That there can't be anything but good, because good is infinite; and the seems-to-be doesn't count. Jesus cured people because he knew diseases weren't real. Isn't it beautiful, Marcia, to know diseases aren't real?"

Marcia did not understand, but she would not run the risk of banishing the bright look that overspread the thin, eager face by questioning, and so remained silent. They were standing thus — Marcia looking over the balustrade, with the

beautiful shifting light from the stained-glass window falling about her; Penelope gazing up, with earnest desire to see the kindling of understanding in the sweet face bending above her — when Mrs. Stuart, quite spent and panting, bustled in.

"Well," she gasped, when she saw them, sinking limply upon the nearest chair, "Penel-o-pe — where *have* you been?" She always said *Pe-nel-o-pe*, drawing out the syllables, making it a channel for her emotions, when she was agitated, and she was greatly agitated now. "Why did you do such a thing?" reproachfully, not waiting for an answer to her first question. "Do you know how you have alarmed us all?"

"I didn't think about you, mamma," said Penelope, in sudden contrition. "I'm so sorry! I didn't think I would be missed — I didn't think anything about it!"

"Didn't think you would be missed!" exclaimed her mother, catching up the words in an injured tone. "Don't you think Marcia would be missed, or Helen or Stella or any of them, if they were gone for hours, no one knowing where? And why wouldn't *you* be missed?"

Penelope looked so troubled that Mrs. Stuart, with a quick change in tone and manner, said,

as she took the little thin face between her hands and kissed it: "You didn't mean to do it, I know. You wouldn't alarm us intentionally, would you?" She held the face between her hands for a minute, looking into it, while Penelope's anxious eyes watched for the well-known shadow she dreaded so much to see, and yet must look for, and presently saw it stealing into her mother's handsome eyes. Then she dropped her own, and forgot to answer. But it was only for a moment, and she glanced up again. "God's perfect child," she had whispered to herself. "But where have you been?" her mother said, smoothing the straggling locks with a gentle touch, "and what have you been doing?"

Penelope glanced up in confusion, but Marcia shaking her head in entreaty not to press the question, and intimating in dumb show that she would explain all, Mrs. Stuart went on quickly, not making it apparent that she expected an answer: —

"You gave us such a fright! The whole household is out now searching for you. Do, Marcia, let them know — or you run yourself, Penny, and ask Delia to say you are found. Give mamma a kiss — and don't, dear, do such a thing again. Now, what is it?" as Penelope disappeared. "Don't

look so mysterious — you give me a creepy feeling. I am all wrought up over this matter. Where did you find her — and what was she doing? She is all rumpled up! Not in the least like her usual tidy self."

"I think Penny is more religious than the rest of us — than we girls, I mean," Marcia began slowly, but her mother caught her up, with a dismayed look: —

"More *what?*" said she.

"Religious."

Mrs. Stuart said impatiently: —

"Well, get at the point! We can talk about this afterward. I can't stand any beating about the bush now — I am too nervous. Four hours — think of it! I don't know what your father would have done had he been here. Where was she?"

"I don't know, mamma."

"Don't know!" incredulously. "Well, Marcia, I must say — " Mrs. Stuart broke off, and looked the completion of her sentence.

"I think she has had some religious experience," Marcia said, and related to her amazed mother all that she could remember of her talk with Penelope.

"I am not particularly surprised, now that I come to think of it," was her mother's comment. "It seems natural and fitting that she should be religious. I have always hoped she would be — religion is all there is for her, poor, dear pet. But I want her to stick to her Prayer-book. I don't like those terms you used; we must discourage that which savors of — of — whatever is not of the church." There was always a lingering in Mrs. Stuart's tones over the word "church." One knew instinctively she wrote it with a capital. "So that is what you think she has been doing, hiding away somewhere, and —" a lifting of the eyebrows completed the sentence. "Poor little dear! I feel half vexed, though. Such a state as it threw me into! I'll have her Confirmed this spring."

"Oh," said Marcia, and Mrs. Stuart regarded her with surprised eyes. "I don't understand that exclamation! Why not have her Confirmed? I mean to speak to Dr. Chadwick at once."

"I wouldn't, mamma!" Marcia colored under the gaze fixed upon her, but went steadily on. "Penny is unlike the rest of us," she said. "She is shrinking. These experiences ought not to be broken in upon! If they lighten her burden —"

"Burden!" interrupted her mother. "Do you mean her — affliction weighs upon her?"

"Oh — I should think it must."

"That she feels it?"

"I should think she must."

"It seems cruel I should have to hear this! I have never supposed she felt it — not especially, that is. She never speaks of it."

"No, she never speaks of it."

"It has always weighed upon me," said Mrs. Stuart, pressing her handkerchief to her eyes; "but I have never thought Penelope felt it — particularly."

Marcia looked at her incredulously, but said nothing. She had heard this sort of comment before, not only from her mother, but from others, and it always amazed her. "The dear woman!" was a frequent remark among the family friends. "How wonderfully she bears it — never a murmur — always sweet and gentle — and so tender to that poor child!" as though Penelope, in an obstinate and self-willed fashion, and in defiance of her mother's wishes, had elected to go through life with a crooked back and an old-looking, weazen, little face.

"Isn't it dreadful?" said Mrs. Stuart, with a doleful look at Marcia.

"She will be happier now, I seem to know it, mamma," Marcia said gently.

"I have dreaded this awakening," Mrs. Stuart rejoined tearfully.

"But, mamma, I have never seen Penny so light-hearted as she has been these last two days." She paused, remembering the scene in the blue room, but Mrs. Stuart's thoughts were elsewhere, and she presently said, with a puzzled frown, "What did you mean by not breaking into these experiences?"

"If she finds help in any way, it is a pity to rob her of it, don't you think?"

"I can't admit that it would be robbing her. You are in a strange frame of mind, Marcia. I can't make you out."

"We are all a little upset, mamma, I dare say," smiled Marcia. "Perhaps I shall be more intelligible after lunch."

"Lunch! Think of it, at this hour! I hope Penny found Delia. I hear voices now. You think I had better not question Penny?"

"I wouldn't, mamma. I am sure it will be better to let it work out in its own way. Penny is so sensitive. Couldn't you caution the girls not to interrupt her?"

"Interrupt her! They won't have a chance, if to-day is a specimen. One thing I *shall* insist upon, if she wishes to go off by herself for hours, as she has to-day, she must say when she is going. I waive the point of *where*, but I must know *when*." Mrs. Stuart looked doubtful; she felt it was giving great latitude to Penelope, and was uncertain of the wisdom of the course. "I wish Penny to be religious," she said, as she left Marcia at her chamber door; "all women should be religious; but I should be sorry to see her eccentric. Those expressions ring in my ears with a strange sound. Where can she have heard them? I suppose Hannah —" with that questioning lift of the eyebrows to complete the sentence.

"Oh, poor dear Hannah!" laughed Marcia. "I don't think, mamma, we need fear Hannah."

"She has been devotion itself to Penny all her life. Still, she isn't a churchwoman."

"No, she isn't a churchwoman."

"But she has taken faithful care of Penny. No, I'm not afraid of Hannah. But there must be something at the bottom of it! I don't feel quite comfortable. However, things may look brighter, as you say, after lunch. It has been a trying morning for us all. I'll speak to the girls

too. If Penny is to have her way in this, she may as well *have* it. I think I'll give her a new Prayer-book as a suggestion — and I'll tell the girls not to bother."

It was to this, no doubt, Penelope owed the many uninterrupted hours she spent with "Science and Health." She wondered a little over this freedom. Curled up in the deep window-seat in her room, she sometimes had a glimpse of a softly retiring figure, and knew one of her sisters had looked into her room and stolen away without speaking. She was satisfied to have it thus, and made no comment upon the course, nor felt that any was required. She never absented herself for long periods; she was careful not to occasion again the alarm which had sprung that day from her prolonged absence; but now in her own room, now in the pine grove, where the wind went in the tree-tops with that wonderful noise, like the far-away sound of the sea that Penelope loved, now by the stream, in the orchard, in the attic, beneath the skylight, listening, perhaps, to the patter, patter, of April showers, or glancing up, with loving wonder, at the mottled April sky, she spent many hours in the study of "Science and Health" and her Bible.

"Penny flits like a robin," Mrs. Stuart commented one day. "Now she's here, now she's there. But she is perfectly normal and happy." She had settled it to her entire satisfaction that Marcia was mistaken in her judgment of Penelope. "You were so wrought up," she had said to her, "we all were, that you mistook fact for fiction, and fiction for fact. Certainly, I have never seen Penny more cheerful in my life, and she is perfectly natural. There is nothing in the least strained nor excessive about her."

Stella said to Helen one day: —

"Penny's getting awfully religious, isn't she? She reads the Bible lots; and I saw her saying her prayers just a minute ago — at least she had her hand over her eyes, and her lips were going. But I don't think it is very nice to say prayers sitting down!"

Helen drew the round-eyed child into her room, and closed the door.

"Stella," she said, "you are old enough to understand. Listen. None of us make comments, or talk to one another about Penny." She stopped, and looked inquiringly at the little girl.

"I don't see why not?" said Stella.

Helen waited a moment, and then said hesitat-

ingly, "Penny has more to bear than the rest of us — you must see that."

"You mean she's de — "

Helen's white fingers touched the child's lips. "Sh! You are old enough, Stella, to do as the rest do, are you not? Well, then," as Stella nodded eager assent, "we do not make comments, nor interfere with Penny's little ways, nor discuss her."

But Penelope's path had its thorns. "I suppose," she remarked, one morning, having a little bruised feeling from a slip she had made, and remembering Love Hathaway's words, "I suppose Moses found it difficult getting to the top of the mountain."

Grace glanced up. She had witnessed the scene, and the swift-passing of the shadow from Penelope's face. "Awful, I am convinced," she said. "I like to feel he bruised his shins!"

"Who is Moses?" asked inquisitive Stella.

Agnes laughed softly.

"Why are you so hard on poor Moses?" smiled Helen, jogging placidly, as she crocheted.

"Because I know he got to the top, in spite of it all," said Grace.

Penelope gave her a grateful glance. How quickly Grace comprehended! Stella said: —

"Grace Stuart! I think you're awful wicked to speak like that of a Bible man. Shins! It's an impolite word, anyway."

The hours spent with "Science and Health" were wonderful hours to Penelope. The more she read the more she wished to read. Each fresh promise, each clear statement, filled her with exquisite happiness. God was her Father; Love the only power; no laws of His, she knew, had made her life a burden. There was divine authority, as Jesus had shown, for the destruction of all that was unlike God; and she reached out eagerly for the help that was near at hand and not afar off. "God never made me deformed," said Penelope.

Sometimes she went to "Science and Health," with the tears very near the surface, but always to find help and fresh encouragement. It was difficult, now and then, not to be influenced by what she heard, by what she felt those about her were thinking; not to see the pitiful glances; not to fear the eyes of strangers, or see the compassion that came into them when they turned upon herself; not to shrink from the glances that followed her about. It was so easy to see in her dressing-table mirror the old face and the old

shape, and so very difficult not to see them as stubborn fact; and in face of it to hold the real thought of herself in mind, to know that she was made in God's image and likeness, and to smile back courageously at the taunting image in the glass, which seemed to say:—

"Oh, *I* am *you!* Can't you see? It is nonsense to believe what 'Science and Health' has shown you. Can't you *see* it isn't true? This is what you are — ask any one. So don't get a foolish notion in your head — you will always be exactly as you are."

When this thought came, Penelope always caught at it, and answered back:—

"Yes — *always* — exactly what I am. And I am God's perfect child — God's *perfect* child. 'Science and Health' shows me *this;* and I know Love is the only power."

## CHAPTER V

### FOR STELLA'S SAKE

PENELOPE, with her hands folded over "Science and Health," as it lay upon her lap, looked pensively at the evening sky, where a star showed faintly in the pale yellow, and a slender moon hung low like a silvery crescent. She had stolen away to read for a few minutes after dinner, and had closed the book to go downstairs again, but she did not go.

"It would please Stella," she murmured. There was a heavy, moist fragrance in the breeze that stole in suddenly, fluttering the muslin curtain and lifting the stringy locks about her brow and ears. She leaned eagerly forward, listening to the happy stir among the little leaves of the maple near by. The birds had ceased their singing; only one belated gentleman somewhere in the distance was uttering his orison, and she listened till that too quivered into silence and Mr. Robin had tucked his head beneath his wing.

"I don't know that I can do it!" ejaculated Penelope, settling back into her former position. Then her eye dropped upon "Science and Health." "Of course I can!" she said with determination. "I am not afraid! How beautiful, not to have to ask God to please *let* me be straight any more, the way I used to; but to know I *am* straight, really." She thought about it for some minutes, and then sprang from her seat nimbly for Penelope. "I guess I had better put into practice what I know," said she, "and not be afraid. I am not afraid! I'm so happy inside I don't mind what people think about me — no, not nearly so much as I used to. I'll ask to have a party."

She went trotting out of the room and down the stairs. But she did not ask for the party that night; there seemed no suitable opportunity. It was in her thoughts, however, most of the time, and whenever she looked at Stella a shining came into her eyes. "Wouldn't she be happy if she knew what's almost surely coming!" she kept thinking.

Stella greatly desired to have birthday parties; but for some reason which had never been made plain to her she was not allowed to have them.

"I don't see why not," she would grumble. But Penelope knew. In her old-fashioned, thoughtful way, she had put this and that together, and found out long ago why the little Stuart girls never had birthday parties. She faintly remembered that Marcia and Helen and Grace had had birthday parties. There was a shadowy picture in her memory of many children on the lawn, whom she had been held up to the nursery window to see, and of the strange, far-away look they had, flittering about among the shrubs and trees. Then Hannah, knocking upon the window, had made her kiss her little fingers to them, and the children, gathering in a body (so large a body it had frightened her, and she had wriggled to get away), had kissed their fingers back to her.

There was another picture, more distinct. She was the baby no longer. Agnes was toddling about the nursery, so she knew she must have been four, at least. On this occasion she had been taken after what seemed to her a world of preparation, downstairs to see the children dance; and some of the children had gathered in a line in front of her, and looked at her with curious, questioning faces, and her lips had begun to quiver. She remembered this very clearly, for she knew

she would cry if they did not go away, and she was ashamed to cry. Then her mother had come, and told Hannah, in a voice which sounded strange and sharp — not at all like her mother's voice — to take her back to the nursery — and there had been no children's parties after that.

"But now," argued Penelope, "I am so happy, I had just as soon have a party as not — I believe I had *just* as soon have one as not. Isn't it lovely the way Christian Science makes one feel?" This she said over and over to herself, her face one broad smile. Occasionally she added something like this: "I know mamma will let me have a party when she sees I really want it, and that will open the way for Stella — and Agnes. I'm not afraid of eyes any more, and I'll say the 'scientific statement of being' so often I'll forget all about the eyes and myself when the time comes, and not mind one bit."

So she stood round in shadowy corners and out-of-the-way nooks, where she was least likely to attract attention, and indulged these pleasant fancies, and smiled, and worked herself up into a state of such blissful assurance, she could not resist giving Stella an anticipatory hug of congratulation when she chanced to come near her.

"Why, Penny," said Stella, surprised. "Seems to me you love me lots."

Penelope thought she would venture a hint. "Wouldn't it be great if you should ever have a party, Stella?" she said excitedly.

Stella looked at the mysterious, smiling face with sharp suspicion on her own. "You don't mean I'm going to have one, do you?" in an eager whisper. Penelope's lips closed in a non-committal line, and Stella added: "I don't see what you are hugging me in this way for if I am not; it seems as though *something* is going to happen."

Then Penelope released her. It was giving undue encouragement, perhaps. But she was fully persuaded in her own mind, now, as to the course she would pursue.

The next morning, with a boldness that surprised her when she thought of it afterwards, she went, at her quick little trot, into the sewing room, where her mother was sitting with Marcia, and asked if she might please have a party on her birthday. They each turned a smiling face as she entered, and she saw them, framed by the window casements, against a background of shimmering maple leaves. Mrs. Stuart's face went quite blank

at the question, and she dropped the tablecloth she was hemstitching upon her lap with a gasp. Penelope had gone close to her side, and was watching questioningly. She was not afraid; a sweet breath from the lilacs wandered in, and she gave a little sniff; a cheerful chirp of bird voices filled the air. Without looking at Marcia, she felt sure of her interest and sympathy.

"Did you say — a party, Penny?" asked her mother, faintly.

"Yes, mamma, please. A birthday party."

There was a twinkle in Penelope's eyes; it amused her to have so amazed her mother. The sewing machine at the further end of the long room, where Hannah and another seamstress were at work, ceased its whirring for a minute, and Mrs. Stuart — too astonished for many words — waited until the whirring was resumed, before she said: —

"Penny, I can't think what you mean!"

"A party," said Penelope, with a little giggle. "I'd love to have a birthday party, mamma!"

Mrs. Stuart drew her hand slowly down over her eyes and face, and looked through the open window, winking, as though she suspected herself of dreaming and were trying to make sure that

she really was awake. "Penny, you *can't* mean a party," said she, turning back abruptly.

"I do, mamma," laughed Penelope. "Don't I, Marcia?"

"Yes," said Marcia, promptly. Her hands were folded over the dainty work upon her lap, and she was watching her mother curiously. She was surprised by the request herself; but she recognized it as being in line with certain subtle changes in Penelope, of which she had become conscious of late. She thought, had she been consulted that morning on the advisability of giving Penelope a birthday party, without this little scene to instruct her, she would have furthered the project quite as heartily as now. This served to show her how fully aware she was of something new in her.

"Do, mamma, let her have it," she added brightly. "It will be such fun — children's parties are so interesting. Then, you know, it is the last birthday on which I shall be at home. Stella has the next — and Stella's is in November. Oh, do let us have the party!"

"Yes, do, do!" chimed in Penelope. "I had forgotten about Marcia. But do let me have a party while Marcia is here!"

"But —" began Mrs. Stuart.

"Oh, not any buts, mamma," laughed Marcia. "Just say yes. Penny is ready to dance up and down for joy — I can see it! aren't you, Penny? Why," in a wheedling tone, "you don't deny me anything these days, mamma! I thought you had forgotten how — you don't want to try and remember."

Mrs. Stuart turned her perplexed face to the window. "Oh, I can't," she ejaculated mentally. Penelope put back a stray lock of the soft hair the breeze had loosened, and at the touch Mrs. Stuart turned back again. "You don't want a party, do you?" she said, taking Penelope's face between her hands and bringing it near her own. "It is just a silly little notion — you haven't considered it well."

"I don't think parties are silly notions," said Penelope, seriously. "And almost everybody likes to have them."

"Wouldn't it do next year?" her mother suggested, brightening at the thought. She had no expectation that a party would be more easily managed then than now; but she would gain time, and time might also put the idea out of Penelope's mind. "Let us say," smoothing back Penelope's thin hair, "that perhaps we'll have

a birthday party *next* year. How will that do?"

"Oh, that wouldn't do at all well," answered Penelope, making round eyes, and looking mysterious. "There's a reason why it needs to be *this* year. Besides, there's Marcia — she wants to come!"

"Yes," added that young lady, setting careful stitches among the lace and tucks, "there's Marcia — and she most certainly wants to come."

"I don't know what to do," declared Mrs. Stuart, in a half vexed tone. "I'm not willing to say yes, and I don't want to say no. How many cross-roads one comes to in life where the sign-boards are no use!"

"Try the 'Yes,'" suggested Marcia.

"Yes," Penelope chimed in, gayly. "Take the Yes road, mamma — because that leads to the party, and we'll have more fun!"

It was the tone in Penelope's voice that turned the scale in favor of the party, no doubt. It struck Mrs. Stuart with great forcefulness, it was so vibrant with gladness.

"I really believe that the child is happy," she said to herself. Then aloud: "Penny, if you are quite sure you really wish to have a party, I sup-

pose I must say yes. Mamma doesn't like denying you any—"

Penelope caught her about the neck, and the sentence remained unfinished. "I knew you would, I knew you would," she kept saying. "Oh, I am sure we will have the nicest time!"

"I can't imagine what has come over her," Mrs. Stuart said perplexedly to Marcia, when Penelope had taken herself smilingly out of the sewing room. But there was no disturbance in her tone. "A party," she added, "is the last thing I should have dreamed of proposing for her."

"She saved you all trouble in that direction, didn't she?" Marcia said, with a little laugh.

"I shall never get over the surprise of it," returned her mother, stitching energetically. "Who would have dreamed she was hatching such a scheme? She is a quiet little mouse. Nobody would think of associating her with a scheme of any sort; yet she must have thought this all out. It didn't have the sound of a sudden impulse."

"No. Her plans were all laid. She came in with a purpose."

Hannah came across the room to ask some question about her work, and Marcia's pretty

head bent itself over her own sewing while her mother gave the necessary directions, and then, peering up into Hannah's face, altering her position only by that turn of her face, she said: —

"Penny is going to have a party, Hannah."

Hannah went, by a series of short, jerky steps, back against the wall, and stood there limply, the pile of soft muslin ruffles crushed against her bosom.

"Hannah!" expostulated Mrs. Stuart.

Marcia leaned back in her chair, laughing. "Why, Hannah, you are surprised, aren't you?" she said. "Is the idea so overwhelming?"

Hannah was more than surprised. An angry glow came slowly into her usually colorless cheeks. At last she found her voice. "It's a shame to do it," she said severely, with a freedom of speech her long years of faithful service robbed of seeming impertinence.

"She asked to have it, Hannah," said Marcia, pleasantly. "Come and sit down," pulling a chair toward herself and motioning to Hannah, "and we'll talk it over."

But Hannah did not move for a minute. "You — don't — mean — it," she slowly ejaculated.

"It was her own idea! She astonished mamma and me by saying she would like to have a birthday party. See how nicely I'm doing this, Hannah!"

Hannah dropped into the chair.

"You're a nice sewer," she said. "It'll be a real beauty, won't it? so soft and fine. I always did like that pattern of lace. And she *asked* for a party!"

Marcia nodded. "Mamma could hardly believe her ears," she smiled. "I wasn't quite so much surprised because —"

"Because what?" eagerly, as Marcia hesitated.

"I don't know that I can say what," with a short laugh. "I have a glimmering reason, Hannah, but I can't get it into words."

"I don't know that *I* can get it into words either, but I know what you mean," was Hannah's mental comment. "And so she's to have a party," she added musingly.

"Why — yes," answered Mrs. Stuart, idly stabbing the heavy linen on her lap with the sharp point of her needle. There was a cloud on Mrs. Stuart's face. Hannah's reception of the news was not reassuring, and her fears where Penelope was concerned, always ready to spring into activity,

began to assert themselves. Marcia watched furtively, slowly fitting and refitting her small gold thimble on successive fingers of her right hand. At last she said, in an impressive tone, to Hannah, but with the same furtive watch upon her mother's face: —

"Of course we must each do all in our power to make Penny feel what a lovely thought it is, and how delightful the party will be."

Hannah flashed a sharp glance into her face. "It wouldn't do, you know," said Marcia, "to let her get an idea that it is unfortunate she wished to have a party, or anything like that. I don't think it is! But Penny is so sensitive we must guard against the danger of her getting any such notion, for if she does, it will spoil all her pleasure in it."

"Trust me for that," said Hannah. "They needn't worry themselves about me," she thought. "I'd make a bridge of my own body for her any time — I guess none of 'em would do more. I'd be the last to throw cold water on her little plans and wishes — the dear!" Then she added aloud, "I'm glad you told me about the party; 'twill give me time to warm up to the theme before I see her."

Mrs. Stuart followed Hannah's retreat to her

own particular corner of the sewing room with a look of misgiving. "Now you see, Marcia," her eyes travelling back to her daughter's face, "how Hannah feels about it. It is very evident she doesn't approve. It vexes me to think what I have done! I wish I had called Hannah over and asked her opinion before giving my consent. It is what I ought to have done, for Hannah's views in regard to Penny are very correct. *You* always side with Penny," complainingly, "which makes it doubly hard for me." She tapped the floor impatiently with the toe of her slipper, and looked out at the tiny maple leaves. "I didn't half like the idea from the start," she finished ruefully, "and now I like it less than ever."

"You must like it wholly now," said Marcia, cheerfully, "because it is to be, and we want to make it as bright as possible. It is beautiful to think she is growing out of that old sensitiveness."

Mrs. Stuart thought a minute.

"Do you think that is it?"

"What else can it be?"

"I'm sure I don't know," with a slight despairing gesture. "I only know I am sorry I said she could have the party. I wonder what your father will say to it?"

"Oh, he will be pleased! Nothing pleases him more than to see Penny happy." After a few minutes' silence, as she held up the dainty waist, viewing it with satisfaction, "Hannah didn't see how anxious Penny was to have the party, mamma," she said.

"No — that is true," admitted Mrs. Stuart. "I had forgotten about that. It was the circumstance that impressed me most strongly, too; strange I should have forgotten! It was the point on which the decision hinged. I never should have consented but for hearing in her voice how genuinely happy she was over the prospect. But for all that I am sorry now that I humored her." She turned her head, frowning, and looked out of the window. Marcia watched her anxiously. She saw the registry in her face of scurrying doubts and fears. She felt it did not promise well for Penelope's party. Agnes's voice came up through the air. She was lying in a hammock swung beneath the maples, singing to herself. Mrs. Stuart unconsciously tapped the tablecloth with her thimble finger to the rhythm of the tune.

"I haven't had children's parties for years," said she, suddenly, as though she were imparting news.

"I have sometimes felt it would have been better," Marcia said quickly.

Mrs. Stuart turned a surprised face. "To have had them? Oh, no. You do have the queerest notions, Marcia! I couldn't expose Penny to what she would have to endure if the children had parties — and I wouldn't have parties for Agnes and Stella and not for Penny — and I wouldn't keep Penny in her room while the rest were having a good time," said Mrs. Stuart, quite bristling with indignation, as though Marcia had suggested something of this kind.

"I believe, mamma, little parties might have been managed for them all, without anything like the discomfort you associate with them in your mind."

Mrs. Stuart looked unhappy. "I am sure I have tried, if ever a mother did, to do right by my children," she said, a vague sense of injustice in Marcia's remarks fermenting hotly. She put the corner of her handkerchief to her eyes for a minute. "If you could remember a party I shall never forget," she said in a self-pitying tone, "you wouldn't say again such a thing as you said just now."

"I said it, mamma, because I feel Penny suffers

keenly at times from the fear that she stands in the way of the good times Agnes and Stella ought to have."

"Was there ever a poor woman so harassed," said Mrs. Stuart, appealing to the clouds. "What would you have me do? She will suffer if she has a party — you seem to think she'll suffer if she doesn't."

"It is all settled now."

"I don't know that it is," doubtfully. "I believe I'll buy her off."

Marcia looked up quickly. "Well, wait until you see how the rest feel," she suggested. It was useless to argue, she knew.

"I might wait until I see how your father feels," considering. "I know about the rest — they will follow in a mad rush at your heels. I'm not sure but your father will be just as bad."

Penelope went from the sewing room to the pine grove, to think over the matter of the party and to read "Science and Health." "I'm so relieved," she mused, sitting down on the ridge strewn thick with pine needles, which she had come to prefer to the hollows and out-of-the-way nooks where she used to hide. "It is just dreadful to keep a brightness out of anybody's life! And

I won't have to do it any more. It is nice to feel the ice is broken, as Grace says; and it wasn't a hard thing to do — I didn't mind a bit." She sat for some minutes, smilingly thinking of this, and of how glad she was that the way was opening for Stella to have the coveted party; and then, drawing "Science and Health" from her pocket, opened it at the little red ribbon. "I should never have been able to do it but for this," she thought with loving gratitude. There were great changes in the grove from that morning when Love Hathaway had found her crying on the little brown bank. She thought of it, as she looked around. Changes akin to these, she felt, had taken place in her own heart. "The wilderness shall bud and blossom as the rose," she murmured. It was an early spring; the cherry trees, as she saw them between the gray trunks of the pines, were white as snow; there was a strong pungent scent in the air; lady-slippers nodded in the dell.

Penelope read for a long time. She was always forgetful of the passing moments when reading "Science and Health"; but she roused at last, with a sudden consciousness that it must be lunch time, and carefully guiding the narrow red ribbon between the leaves to mark her place, slipped

it into her pocket, and started at a brisk pace homeward, seeing in her fancy pleasant pictures of Stella's amazement when she should be told about the party.

But Stella spied her, and went flying to meet her. "Oh, isn't it lovely!" she cried, as soon as she felt she could make herself heard. "I've been looking everywhere for you!" flinging her arms about Penelope's neck. "Marcia told us! and I'm just as excited as I can be!"

The picture of Stella in possession of the knowledge, and in full enjoyment of it too, was quite as delightful as Stella amazed could have been, and Penelope's little face beamed. Had there been any lingering doubt in her mind as to the pleasure-yielding quality of her scheme, it would have been wholly put to rout by this glimpse of Stella. A sense of something like martyrdom, of submitting to the party for the sole purpose of opening the way for the gratification of Stella's wishes, which had attached to the idea from the first, was suddenly wiped out. She began from that instant to take pleasure in the prospect on her own account.

"Won't we have fun, Stella!" she said, her eyes dancing with enjoyment.

"Well, I guess!" said Stella, giving her a little

shake of delight. "You *are* the greatest! I never was *so* surprised in my life — and Agnes is *almost* as surprised as I am. You've been so mum! How you could keep it to yourself, when you meant to do it, I don't see! Did you hate to ask? I suppose Marcia helped you coax."

"Marcia helped," admitted Penelope. "She is always helping, isn't she?"

"How did you come to think of it?" winding an arm about Penelope's neck, and drawing one of Penelope's arms around her own waist. "I want to hear every little thing about it."

"I just thought I had better have it," smiled Penelope, turning her head with something of an effort, to look into Stella's face.

"You must as good as have a wishing-cap," observed that young person, ruefully. "*I've* thought I had better have one lots of times — but I didn't get it. Do you suppose I'll have one now?"

"Oh, I should think so."

"So should I. I asked mamma, but she didn't look very promising. She said we would wait and see how yours comes off."

"Then I hope it will come off *beautifully!*"

"That's what I said, and mamma told me not

to be selfish. I don't think it's selfish to wish yours to come off beautifully, do you? But I guess mamma thought I was thinking about my own. It wasn't *all* that!"

"It will be almost the same as your own," said Penelope, twisting her neck again in Stella's uncomfortably close arm. "There won't seem to be much difference."

"Oh, oh," cried Stella, stopping to give Penelope an ecstatic hug, "I can't believe it's true! I shall have dancing at my party — shall you?"

"I — don't know."

"Shall you invite my friends?"

"I believe I'll invite all our friends," said Penelope, with a sudden thought.

Stella looked doubtful. "That would make it awfully mixed up," she commented. But she was too happy over the prospect to be greatly disturbed by the possibility of its being mixed up. She pulled Penelope's arm about her waist, and slipped her own arm over Penelope's neck again.

"I guess you can have everything just as you want it," she said, as they walked on, little airy shadows of the maple leaves flickering over them. "Don't say I told you, but Marcia asked mamma to let you make all the arrangements yourself."

Penelope made a wry face. "I wouldn't know what to do," she said.

"It will come to you. Evelyn Selfridge's parties are always nice — she has dancing," said Stella, suggestively.

"I believe I'll have mine out of doors."

"We can't dance out of doors!"

"Those who wish to dance can go in the house. Old Mr. Piper," laughing, "and Mrs. Turnover won't care to dance." The last was a protégé of her mother's, in whom she had long been interested.

"Penny Stuart!" But Stella laughed too. "Let's skip — I can't walk any longer. I feel just like the larks — all soary!" said she. So away they went, hair tossing on their shoulders, eyes sparkling, out of the sunlight into the shadow, and out in the sunlight again; the tender, billowy grass upon one side, and on the other the orderly garden, where only the crocuses had bloomed on that morning when Penelope had come singing along the avenue, with that new treasure in her pocket.

"I am going to have a party, Hannah," Penelope said, quaking a little as she made the announcement. Hannah was standing behind her, brushing her hair, so that Penelope could not

see her face, but the squeal she gave, intended to express unbounded delight, fell so far short of its purpose that Penelope was very much surprised, and her face fell. "Aren't you glad, Hannah?" she asked anxiously.

"Glad!" echoed Hannah, pausing, brush in hand, and peering round a little way into Penelope's face. "Isn't that a question? Did you ever have a good thing in your life that I *wasn't* glad for?"

"No," said Penelope. "But I thought you didn't sound glad, Hannah."

Hannah's face was a study. In truth, the proposed party was still a trouble to her. She brushed on in silence for a minute. "You great goose," she thought severely, "don't you know it's as bad to overdo as underdo?"

"Perhaps I didn't sound surprised," she said finally.

"No, you didn't, Hannah. I thought you would be ever so much surprised."

"Well, now, that's just it. I wasn't," craning around this time until she could see directly into Penelope's face. "Miss Marcia told me. I ain't a bit good at making off!"

"Oh, is that it?" said Penelope, pleased. "I'm

glad; for I really did think, Hannah, that you didn't perhaps like the idea. I want you to like it because I like it so much."

"You do like it, then?" said Hannah, brushing thoughtfully. "You're sure you like it?"

"Why, yes," laughed Penelope. "I'm perfectly sure I like it. I like it very much!"

"Then I like it, too," returned Hannah, with a heartiness that could not be questioned. "A birthday party — well, well, well!" laying aside the brush and comb. "Won't we have a time?"

Penelope stood up. "Isn't it lovely?" she said, her face radiant. "I shall write the first invitation to you, Hannah. Stella is *so* happy — she has always wanted to have parties, and now she's overjoyed."

Hannah's faculties seemed to halt, as she halted herself, with Penelope's frock in her hand. "So that's it," she said, as having at last sifted the matter to the bottom. "It's so Stella can have parties, is it?"

"It isn't all that," Penelope answered. "I want a party — I've been glad every minute since I asked mamma."

"You aren't exactly called upon to lay yourself on the altar," Hannah went on severely. "*No*,

*you are not!* No sacrifice need be made for them that don't particularly need it."

"It isn't a sacrifice!" scornfully. "I want to have the party. I'm just full of it."

"Which makes a difference," said Hannah, "if you honestly and truly do want it."

"I honestly and truly do," said Penelope, laughing.

"I believe it," said Hannah, after due deliberation, slipping the dress carefully over Penelope's head. "You look genuine. And if you like it — I like it. If you want it — I want it. Where thou lodgest I will lodge; where thou goest I will go — that's what Ruth said to Naomi. I always think of us when I hear it read. I'll never leave my lambkin [one of Hannah's many names for Penelope], I don't care who or what asks me to — so there!"

"I hope no one will ask you," Penelope said seriously, with a selfishness she felt ashamed of, remembering what Marcia had told her.

"Wouldn't be a mite of use," laughed Hannah. "Not a mite. How it does delight my heart," with a lingering gaze, "to see you grow so bright and happy! You always have been the best little thing in the world, but lately you seem so chipper."

"I am finding out that God is good, Hannah."

Hannah held up her hands with a cry. "Oh, dear heart, don't!" she implored. "I'd most as soon hear you sing you want to be an angel."

Penelope laughed. "Don't mind, Hannah," she said. "I couldn't help laughing, it sounded so funny. I must go now, but sometime I'll tell you what I meant — it isn't what you think, Hannah."

"Think about the party," Hannah called after her. "We'll both think about the party. Land!" she ejaculated, "what a turn it gave me! If she's getting religious, it's the end; she'll go, sure," and Hannah began to cry. In a moment or two she flicked her eyes impatiently. "I don't believe it," she exclaimed, "and I won't! I've never seen her as bright and happy as she is now, and if she was thinking about being an angel, it stands to reason she wouldn't be asking for parties."

Hannah's fears were not wholly allayed, however, and for days she followed Penelope's ways with anxious scrutiny. "It's sheer nonsense," she told herself; "she's happy as a bird." Still she could not quite shake herself free of the anxiety. She dilated on the delights of the coming birthday

party, and occasionally grew reminiscent. "Aunt Eunice had told her this," and "Jackson had told her that," of gay doings at Weehaukn, in the old days. Once she had assisted herself at Miss Love's lawn party. "Sixteen years old I was," laughed Hannah, "and greener-eyed and more freckled-faced than you've ever seen me, pettie."

Penelope questioned guardedly; anything relating to the Hathaways roused her interest, and Hannah warmed to her theme. "It was the first glimpse I'd ever had of anything of that kind," she finished apologetically, "so what could you expect? Just up from Nova Scotia — green as my eyes. I gaped and gaped, and poor Aunt Eunice, she kept stirring me up, soft like, but determined. I get an impression now of having been moved on or nudged or whispered at pretty steady," said Hannah with a laugh.

"Dance, did you say? Oh, didn't they! I can see 'em now just as plain! weaving in and out, in and out, among the trees, with the great full moon, like a laughing face, peeping down among the branches."

"Oh! It was in the evening?"

"It went on into the evening — I guess it went on pretty well into the night; but I'm not sure.

I handed round the ices — when I didn't forget to move, and down in the shady places, especially round the pond — lake they called it, the fireflies looked like stars. I never see fireflies without thinking of that night."

Her eyes followed the slow, flapping flight of some crows across the blue, as she went on musingly: "But the shimmering of those lovely dresses, and those willowy shapes, and the music! I could hardly keep my own feet still! But I had been instructed on that point — the great difficulty seemed to be I kept 'em too still! Your papa was there," glancing at Penelope. "And here I'm telling *you*. My, how queer things do come out! I tipped an ice he was going to hand Miss Love all over his shoe, and broke the dishes. Wasn't I scarlet! I felt as though I was all on fire, I was that frightened. 'You are Eunice's niece, aren't you?' Miss Love said, sweet as a May morning; and your papa hid the dishes, so Aunt Eunice wouldn't know, and Miss Love said she would tell her mother, and for me not to mind. I can hear 'em laughing now, as I went away to fetch another ice, but I ran into Jackson — and forgot all about it, and never went back," she ended, laughing.

"Who is Jackson?" asked Penelope, becoming suddenly intent upon the handkerchief she was hemstitching, sitting close to Hannah, at one of the windows in her own room.

"He's nobody — we don't care a snap for him," said Hannah, quite spitefully.

"I suppose he is married," said Penelope at a venture.

"I should say he had better be! It's high time — he's old enough, goodness knows!"

Then he wasn't married! Penelope's tender little heart was troubled. It was a more serious thing to stand in the way of this man's happiness than to have kept the brightness of birthday parties out of Stella's experience. But Christian Science, which had helped her in the one direction, might help her also in the other, she thought, brightening hopefully.

"I suppose, Hannah, people are sometimes married when they are as old as thirty-five, aren't they?" She had no idea of Hannah's age.

Hannah looked down comically on the industrious little figure, never lifting its head, setting precise stitches in the handkerchief. "Such things *have* happened," she admitted. "Why?"

"I was thinking that sometime it might be so that somebody would marry Jackson."

"Jackson's a goose," said Hannah. "I don't know that anybody's called upon to marry a goose!"

But Penelope was not deceived; she understood very well, and said to herself "that she would not forget Jackson — and who could tell?"

"Was Miss Love very beautiful?" she said softly, after an interval of meditative silence, during which Hannah had made buttonholes in a jerky and determined fashion. "Very beautiful, I mean?"

Hannah dropped her work upon her knee. "That beautiful," she said, with something like a solemn hush coming upon her, "you'd rather look at her than at the loveliest flower that ever bloomed."

"What was her hair like, Hannah?"

"Gold. And her eyes were like violets. They had a sweet, timid kind of look in them, too, like violets."

"That is *my* Love," was Penelope's mental comment. "Small, Hannah?"

"No. Tall. Tall as Miss Grace. She reminds me of Miss Love sometimes, when she is quiet.

But Miss Love was more beautiful! She was the *most* beautiful person I've ever seen — and that sweet and lovable! The light went out of that home when she was taken away. I read something once afterward about the hollow sounding bittern guarding its nest — it seemed awfully desolate, and reminded me of Weehaukn. I've only seen it a few times since then — I don't want to see it! It is gloom itself. Everything seemed to stop when Miss Love went; and her father and mother! 'twould break your heart to see them — their hair turned as white as snow!"

"What a pity they didn't know God is Love," Penelope said musingly.

"Oh! You couldn't make 'em think that," said Hannah, with sharp decision. "They were so bitter nobody dared talk about it. Even Dr. Chadwick wouldn't have dared mention God to 'em! No, indeed! and he a minister. Then they went away. But they are just the same now — years don't soften 'em any."

Grace, seeing them at the window, sauntered in that minute, sketch-book in hand. "Sally Damon is downstairs," she said, "and Hope Dillingham. Such chattering! party, party, party, party — perfect magpies. They're as interested and excited,

Penny, as Stella herself — and I can't put it stronger. The only difference is Stella feels a proprietary right in the affair. I'm not sure but my lady is under the small delusion that it is *her* party instead of yours. Agnes is just as pleased as she can be, but she doesn't say much — for the very good reason, perhaps, that it's difficult getting a word in even edgewise."

"Who isn't pleased?" said Hannah, gayly. "If there's anybody that isn't pleased, they'd better not show themselves in this region."

"You needn't worry," Grace said. "If ever there was union in a family on any point, there is union in this family on the party question. We are of one mind."

Perhaps an exception should have been made of Mrs. Stuart, but Grace was not aware of this. She was buoyed up, however, by the hope that the majority was in the right, and so drifted with the multitude; but she was never wholly assured, and had many minutes of misgiving when that haunting fear cast its darkling shadow over her.

"We must do everything we can to insure Penny's having a good time," she said to Helen, one morning, when they were talking over the party. Her face wore a dubious expression; a

prophecy of the reverse of a good time sounded in her voice.

"I am sure she will have a good time," returned Helen, placidly. "So will the rest. We're all as pleased over it as Penny herself."

Mrs. Stuart fumbled with her knitting. "That is the one thing that makes me feel it isn't perhaps the unwisest thing in the world," she said slowly, "that and Hannah's enthusiasm. I am surprised at Hannah; she wasn't favorable to the idea at first. Marcia says it was because of its newness — it took time to adjust her thought to it. She is all interest now."

"So is papa."

"So is papa," echoed Mrs. Stuart. "Papa!" with a laugh. "I should think, to hear him, that he was about fourteen years old himself, and that it was his party."

Helen laughed pleasantly. "It's a novelty, mamma! How many years has it been since we had a child's party? Let me see. I had the last one — do you remember? I was younger than Stella."

"Do I remember?" dolefully. "There is no danger of my forgetting. I would like to forget." She knit a few stitches, and dropped the work

upon her lap. "I hope," with a sigh, "this may prove a happier occasion than that was, but I have my doubts. I never should have consented but for Marcia."

"We all stand with Marcia, mamma, in this affair," Helen said, swaying slowly as she sewed. "I think you do too, really, only you are nervous over it."

"It is useless dwelling on that point now," said Mrs. Stuart, beginning to knit with energy. "I have consented, and Penny is to have the party. The thing to do is to make sure the arrangements are perfect. I want nothing to regret later on in that direction. I don't feel quite sure about Marcia's plan," with a questioning glance.

"It is coming out famously! Penny was a little shy at first about saying what she would like, but she is getting over that. She has some of the prettiest ideas!"

"Well — if you take the responsibility of seeing she makes no mistakes, I don't mind. But from what I know now, I wouldn't undertake to say whether it will turn out an old folks' supper or a baby show."

"It will turn out something very pleasant, I am sure," Helen answered quietly. "It is just the

kind of weather for a lawn party, and Penny's heart is set on an out-of-door affair. She says when she is eighteen she means to have a lawn party that will last on into the evening, with a big, full moon, and that they will dance in white dresses among the trees. I don't know where she got the idea! Hannah seems to furnish her with a good many suggestions — I should never have dreamed of looking in that direction for help."

"I don't know," smiled Mrs. Stuart. "Hannah has a quick eye and retentive memory, and she has seen a good deal. She lived with the Eustaces five years before coming to me, and they had a houseful of young people. She was hardly more than a child when she went there from the Hathaways."

"I know. She told us once — sixteen. And green, as she expressed it, as grass. Poor Hannah!"

"Oh — not *poor* Hannah! She has had a very comfortable life, I'm sure. But she is a good girl — faithfulness itself. She worked twelve or thirteen years, paying for that little place of theirs in Nova Scotia, and helping her brothers and sisters on to their feet. I don't believe anything could have swerved her from her purpose. Since then she has had Penny!"

"She is as bright as a button," Helen said, "and so cheery with Penny. I often hear them chirping like sparrows. Certainly she has come out wonderfully in this matter of the party."

"I hope her judgment is correct," returned Mrs. Stuart, a little shadow stealing over her face. "I have always relied upon it where Penny is concerned, and have never had occasion to regret doing so. I hope I shan't now. But I wish the party were over."

"It will be very soon—we haven't long to wait."

Mrs. Stuart watched Penelope closely, but no shadow was discoverable on the little face. She was radiant with happiness, dancing about the livelong day. She exulted in the pleasant commotion; it was so delightful to feel herself the centre of it all. Her colorless life had furnished no taste of anything of the sort before; it was the first exciting event she had ever known in connection with herself. "If she isn't happy, I have never seen a child who was," Mrs. Stuart said to herself many times each day. "But what has worked the sudden change passes my power of guessing."

The wished-for day dawned at last, bright and beautiful. The first strong, level beams of the

sun, as they struck into Penelope's chamber and awakened her, were so very golden, they surprised her. "Gold means love," she thought. "Dr. Chadwick said that once in a sermon. It is like having little rays of love sifting all about me. How beautiful to have it so on my birthday! Love is always around me — I know that! even if I don't see it with my eyes, for *God* is Love. *Love* is the *only power.* How thankful I am to have found that out! How different it makes this day from what it might have been! I'll never feel sorry any more. I'm so happy I don't seem to know I have a belief of deformity. I hardly ever think of it now!" She closed her eyes and said the "scientific statement of being." "I just seem to know divine Love can do everything," she added.

There were diamonds and sapphires and rubies flashing on the lawn when she peeped out; the old apple trees showed like huge bouquets, all pink and white with tender points of green; the sky was blue; a sweet whiff from the garden wandered in; the air was athrill with the song of the bobolinks.

"Oh," said Penelope, with a long-drawn breath, "how sweet — how lovely!"

She sank down upon the low window-seat, and planting both elbows on the window-sill, nestled her chin in her clasped hands. "My heart," said Penelope, "is just brimful. How beautiful the dear world is! I know this will be the happiest day of all my life."

"I envy you, Penny," Stella said complainingly. "Tables under the trees and everything! What can *I* do? November — think of it! even if I have a party. Do you think yours will go off well? I do. Mamma says it will depend upon how yours goes off whether I can have one or not, and that makes me feel anxious. I think it promises real well, don't you? Agnes says she does. Grace says the world looks as though it had dressed itself up on purpose to please you."

"I don't see how it can help going off well," Penelope made answer. "I feel so sure of it. There are lots of nice things we can do in November — we wouldn't all want parties just alike."

"N-no," said Stella; but she would have liked to exchange seasons with Penelope.

There was a pleasant hubbub throughout the house — chattering, questioning, running up and

down and to and fro; leaving and carrying and forgetting and returning, everybody's eyes as bright as stars, and Penelope's breath short and quick from excitement; a half-dozen people doing the same thing (to the neglect of their own special duties) called to order, and set in the way they should go, by Penelope (who astonished them with unsuspected capabilities in the way of generalship) or by Helen; Mr. Stuart home at twelve o'clock; an early lunch, for which no one particularly cared; teams arriving with hired settees and chairs; tables spread beneath the trees; Mrs. Stuart forgetting her fears, and as happily excited as the rest; and last but not least, the toilets.

Hannah took extra pains with her pale, sandy-gray hair, and donned her new gray gown. It was not especially becoming, a fact which she detected; but it was new, and her best, and only the best was good enough for this occasion. "I feel as though the world was coming to an end," she soliloquized, fastening her collar with a pin made from Penelope's baby hair. "If anybody had told me two weeks ago that I'd be going to a party to-day, I should have thought them crazy. Think of her inviting my cousin and her boy — the dear! Black would set me off better —

Pshaw! I wouldn't wear black to-day if 'twould make me a beauty!"

The daintily laden tables beneath the trees were a tempting sight. Airy May shadows danced over them, and lay in quivering patterns on the velvety grass. The sky was cloudless; it was warm as a day in June; there was a pleasant drowsy droning of bees among the flowers. There were settees and chairs scattered about and hammocks stretching from tree to tree; there were cushions and swings and bats and balls and hoops and ropes and croquet and tennis; there was a gay express wagon for little Ralph Warren; a doll (Penelope's own, with a marvellous toilet from Helen's clever fingers) for Dorothy Deland; a bright red kite (which wouldn't go up, however, because the breeze was lacking) for young Dick Damon; and there were rocking chairs; and little capes and shawls lying about for sensitive shoulders. Nobody was forgotten. There were boats on the little stream, which widened not far away to meet the river, and there were carriages for those to whom driving was a delight and novelty.

For guests, there were the rich and the poor; the old and the young; the seamstress's little daughter

and the mayor's son; "the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker," and Dr. Chadwick. And there was Penelope, in her prettiest new white dress, radiant-faced, eyes dancing for joy, beaming upon them all.

## CHAPTER VI

### AFTER THE PARTY

As the sun dipped below the horizon that evening, Penelope, with tear-stained face, sat herself down on the low window-seat on which she had sat that morning, and propping her elbows on the sill in the same fashion, buried her chin in her hands and looked forth again. Red and dull and sad were Penelope's eyes this evening, and her lips twitched convulsively now and then.

The party was over. The thought of it made her shudder. Down there among the trees where the tables had been spread she could not bear to look, and so turned her eyes in an unheeding fashion upon the distant prospect across the river, where the scattered farmhouses, in the fervid firing of their windows, seemed to be in flames. She noted it dully, and the rosy flush in the east, that answered the west's fierce burning. She heard the joyous birds, and Grace's bright voice down on the piazza. But she heard and

saw, with a miserable sense of being apart from and out of tune with gladness.

"Dickie, how could you!" she ejaculated, and two great tears rolled down her cheeks. "I had forgotten I could seem queer and strange to any one," she thought.

She had seemed not only queer and strange, but interesting and promising to young Dick Damon, whose business eye was generally wide open, and coaxing her aside with an eager finger, he had asked: —

"Did you ever play menagerie?"

Dick was eight or thereabouts; perhaps he was tall for his age, for his eyes and Penelope's were very nearly on a level, as they stood facing one another in the shade of the white lilac.

"No," she said, smiling; then added, "Girls don't play such games."

"Oh, that doesn't make any difference!" with a superior air. "It's lots of fun! We play it over at my house. I'm the showman because — because I like to be! and I have the rest for animals. Will you come over and be a camel?" dropping the red kite in his earnestness. "You'd have a beau-tiful hump! May I touch it?" and before she could move or speak he had slipped

his little hand, in a light, inquiring, and admiring fashion over her back and shoulders.

"Dickie, don't!" she cried out sharply.

Dick started back, with an amazed, frightened look.

"Did it hurt?" regretfully. "I didn't know it would hurt to touch it. I'm awful sorry."

"Don't say any more," she answered peevishly. Then, seeing how troubled he looked, added kindly: "You didn't hurt me — in the way you mean. But I can't explain. Only please, Dickie, don't say another word."

It was well for her that most of the guests had already gone. Dick went away with a rueful glance, uncertain of what he was guilty. Penelope choked back the tears, and smiled bravely, but the instant the last "good-by" was said, stole away, in that old, cringing fashion, to the little "dark room" to ease her burdened heart by indulging in a "good cry." It was not difficult to effect an escape; the family were unsuspicious; no one dreamed of what had happened; and a multitude of things claimed their thought. She had her cry out, and then came down to her own room.

"Dickie, how *could* you!" she thought again.

There was another gusty fit of weeping, and her head went down upon the window-sill. "There," she exclaimed, straightening up suddenly, dabbing her eyes with her wet handkerchief. "I didn't mean to cry any more. Only I can see him so plain — beckoning — beckoning." Her lips worked convulsively.

Penelope had not forgotten about "Science and Health" this time, as she cried in the little dark room. But she had put the thought of it away. She wished to indulge in her grief for a while; it gave her a strange sort of satisfaction to think how miserable she was, and how cruelly her bright day had clouded over.

"I wish I hadn't," she mused dolefully, watching, with woe-begone face, the small pink clouds lazily sailing overhead, without much thought of what she was looking at — none, perhaps. "I wish I had just held to what I know is true, and hadn't cried. It seems ever so much harder to do it now." She closed her eyes and said the "scientific statement of being," and over and over that "God is good," and "Love the only power," but it did not seem to heal the hurt.

It was near the dinner hour — the hour was late this day — and Penelope felt she could not go

down. Hearing Delia, she sent word to her mother, would she please excuse her.

Instead of the message she was waiting for, she presently heard her mother panting up the stairs. "What is the matter, Penny?" she called, as she reached the landing, catching sight of the little figure in the chair by the window. There was still a piteous droop to Penelope's lips, though she was fortifying herself, or trying to do so, with the thought that "Love is the only power."

Mrs. Stuart bustled into the room; Helen followed, then came Marcia, and lastly Grace. When they had all entered, Penelope, with a half startled expression, continued to stare inquiringly at the door, as if expecting other members of the family might yet appear. "What is the matter, Penny?" Mrs. Stuart said again. Then, "Why, you've been crying!"

"I'm not going to cry any more, mamma," Penelope answered, so near it at the moment, she had some ado to keep the tears back.

Mrs. Stuart wheeled round upon Marcia with a just-as-I-expected sort of expression upon her face, but turned quickly back as Penelope said: —

"I do not care for dinner, mamma, and I

thought you would, perhaps, excuse me from going down. I would rather not go down."

Marcia, with a quick grasp of the situation — at least so far as the discernment that Penelope had been greatly hurt — knelt by her chair, as she said with affected playfulness, to which her desire to comfort gave a genuine ring: —

"How can any of us care for dinner, after the spread you gave us, I should like to know?" She slipped a tender arm about the little form, adding: "I never ate so much at one time in my life before. I ate more," with foolish fondness, "than I wanted, because it was all of your planning — and so very nice."

"Delicious," said Grace. "I have never seen anything like poor old Mrs. Turnover's enjoyment of the chicken. And as to Thomas Tate and that dear old Mr. Pole, I helped them until I was ashamed to look them in the face. It's very bad form, I know," sitting upon the bed, "to comment upon one's guests; but I want you to know, Penny, that your feast was a great success."

Helen, sitting down in the little rocker, added her testimony. "Mrs. Chadwick asked me who made the sandwiches, and I told her Penny made every one. I was so proud of them, dear! They

looked too nice to be eaten — it seemed a pity to chew them out of shape. Not a grain too much butter in the stars; not a shade more deviled ham in the hearts than there should have been; the lettuce in the oak leaves crisp; and every ingredient perfect. I foresee," archly, "who will soon be mamma's sub! But, Penny, I would rather be put out of office by you than any one in the wide world. Being you, takes away the sting."

Penelope looked at each speaker in turn, with an attempt to smile, but said nothing. She was not expected to speak, however. They never questioned her when she was found in tears, nor tried to make her talk; only chattered among themselves, and so comforted and cheered her.

"The hot dishes were a great success," said Grace, opening her sketch-book and beginning to scratch. "The soufflé and scallops, and all that, just what the old people liked. You have the wisdom of Solomon, Penny. Everybody had a particular kind of fun. Eating, rowing, driving — that was a great game of tennis! I didn't see a single dull-looking individual the whole afternoon. Mrs. Morehouse and the tea was a picture; her bright beady eyes fairly glistened when she saw me making it."

"Mrs. Turnover told me she had never had so good a time in her life," said Helen. "*In her life!*"

"Poor old soul," Grace said, jerking up her head, with ready sympathy. "I'm glad you had chicken, Penny. One day — think of it! — in a lifetime! I dare say she will go on thinking about this afternoon as long as she lives. Do you suppose it wiped out, for the time, the memory of pain and poverty?"

"She certainly had a good time," said Helen, conclusively.

"You made a great many people happy to-day, sweetheart," added Marcia.

"The low and the high, the rich and the poor — 'all sorts and conditions of men,'" said Grace. "I kept thinking of it all the time. It was unique, Penny."

"It was nice having Jane Cummings and her boy — it pleased Hannah."

"I'm glad Hannah was pleased," Penelope said. "I hope Hannah had a nice time."

Mrs. Stuart, leaning over the back of Penelope's chair, smoothing the thin, disorderly locks with her soft fingers, paid no heed to the girls' talk. She was blaming herself for having consented to

the party, and vainly wishing she had had strength of will to abide by her own convictions. It was a sad thing to Mrs. Stuart to have Penelope hurt; and she met Marcia's reassuring, upward glances with mute refusals to take heart. But when Penelope said this, she swooped forward with sudden animation, and said: —

"I hardly knew Hannah. She couldn't enjoy herself enough."

"I am glad," Penelope said, tipping back her head to look up at her mother. She smiled, but the smile had a wan effect, and was hardly reassuring. Mrs. Stuart took the little face between her hands and kissed the forehead. "Everybody had a good time," she said, "if that is any comfort."

"I had the time of my life," observed Grace cheerfully, sketching with great industry, the bent head showing a pretty silhouette against a panel of golden light a western window let in upon the wall. "That little Morton Greenwood is the sweetest thing; with his 'What shall me do? What shall me say?' So is Dorothy Deland; but she is different. So quaint, the little old grandmother! Speaking of grandmothers, what a *dear* old Mrs. Everett is! I never realized it before. We had

the best time! I enjoyed the extremes of your party immensely, Penny."

"It was an occasion of every one to his taste," observed Helen. "If we didn't like one thing, there was another."

Penelope knew they were trying to cheer her up, and told herself she needed to be cheered, and tried to feel she wished for this result. But the hurt did not go. On the contrary, the longer they talked, the more coaxingly they strove to lure a smile to her lips, the more obstinately determined seemed that weight upon her heart not to yield an inch. "When everybody else had so good a time, it's strange my good time couldn't have gone on unruffled," was the substance of what she was saying over and over in her heart. "I felt so sure of a good time!"

"Well!" exclaimed Grace, breaking into a little silence with such explosive energy they all looked at her, "have you heard Mr. Jack Prescott laugh? You've missed something if you haven't."

"There must have been something to laugh at," observed Helen, jogging comfortably, having waited a sufficient length of time for further enlightenment.

"I'm not a judge," returned Grace, her head on one side, as she held her sketch at arm's length to view it critically. "He was kind enough to laugh at one of my jokes. Or his own stupidity," she added. "Now that I come to consider the matter, I don't know which."

There was a look of interest on Penelope's face, and seeing it, she launched forth eagerly, bending over her sketch-book again, giving a touch here and a touch there as she talked. "I told him, Penny, 'Birds' orchestra was furnishing the music — did he like it?' He wasn't willing to own he hadn't heard it; I could see that — probably thought it had been squeaking somewhere in the background without attracting his attention, and didn't want to chill my childish satisfaction by telling me so. Being from 'the Hub,' he undoubtedly feels we country folks adore a band. 'Out of town,' he asked, 'or local talent?' I thought I should explode, but choked back the laugh, and 'that demure,' as Hannah would say, told him 'Recently from the South.' 'M-m,' he went, and pursed out his lips. You would have thought to look at him, Penny," folding her hands over the sketch-book with the pencil between her fingers, "that he not only knew the exact locality

from which they had come, but had travelled with the band. It was *too* ridiculous!

"But it dawned upon him at last. I had given up all thought of his seeing the point, and was about asking, 'Didn't he think the sky blue, for May?' when I saw it coming. The laugh I mean. It began at his eyes — his eyes are splendid — and spread all over his homely face. Then he opened his great mouth — I like a great mouth — and didn't he laugh! It makes me laugh to think of it," and Grace, in a sudden convulsion, doubled over her sketch-book. "I hid away afterward," wiping her eyes, "and made a sketch of it. Where is it?" fluttering the leaves. "Ah, here it is! Oh, you funny fellow! I hadn't time to do the face, but I caught the grin!"

The silhouette in the paling panel of light threw its hands up over its face and rocked itself to and fro. "I'll never forget it," said Grace, in a voice choked with laughter, and smothered by her hands. "I know I never shall."

Helen reached for the sketch-book, and laughed too, and handed it to her mother, and her mother laughed; and so did Marcia; and Penelope laughed with a sudden mirthfulness that affected them like a fresh sea breeze. The atmosphere

seemed to clear instantly; and Mrs. Stuart, on the window-seat at Penelope's left, looked over her bent head at Marcia on a footstool opposite, and the quick glance said, "The spell is broken," or something to that effect; and the answer was "Yes."

Grace possessed herself of her precious sketch-book and went back to her seat on the bed. "It isn't bad," she said critically, "and I believe I can sketch the face; it's a pity I shan't see him again. Just think, Penny, he stayed over to-day on purpose to come to your party! Isn't that an honor? and he is going on the night train. Yes, I can do the face," after a few experimental scratches. "The laugh suggests it — the smile and the smiler are one. Penny, ask Marcia if all Boston youths are interesting."

"He is not from Boston," Helen interposed. "He's from Newton."

"It's all one to me," returned Grace.

Helen, being Rosamond Selfridge's most intimate friend, was in possession of certain points of information regarding Mr. Jack not shared by the family in general, Mr. Jack being Rosamond's favorite cousin.

"Did you say he is going to-night?" asked Mrs. Stuart.

"To-night. I hope he won't forget how to laugh before he comes again. I hate to feel so much richer than the rest."

"He has made a short visit. It is several years since he was last here."

"He was abroad, mamma, a year after he finished his studies. And he isn't a *youth*, Grace. He is practising law."

"He has just hung out his shingle — he told me so. He told me something else — he is a Christian Scientist — whatever that may be."

Penelope gave a start, and the color flamed into her face. A Christian Scientist at her party, and she had not known it! She very nearly cried with disappointment. It was over so quickly — the start, the flush, the quiet settling back — that Marcia did not feel quite sure she had seen the one or the other. She recalled Penelope's question about the Christian Science church in Boston, and wondered vaguely in what that question had its rise. But it was not the family habit to catechize Penelope, lest she should be hurt; so she patted the little hand resting upon the chair-arm and allowed the incident to drift out of her mind. Penelope called up the young man's manner as he spoke with her and the wonderful light in his eyes. "I should think

I would have known," she mused, and wondered were all Christian Scientists so cheery and inspiring as Mr. Jack Prescott and Love Hathaway.

"I never heard Rosamond mention that," said Helen, "about his being a — Christian Scientist, did you say?"

Grace shrugged expressively. "I gathered from a word he dropped that the Selfridges aren't making that item public. But no matter — he's a fine fellow!"

"Splendid! Why, the Selfridges think he's the salt of the earth."

"Inclusive or exclusive of the fact I have named, should you say?"

"Why — I don't know about that."

"Whatever Christian Science may be," resumed Grace, holding off the sketch to make sure she was getting reasonably correct the face to which the laugh belonged, "he seemed very sorry I didn't know of it, and I think he would have enlightened me, but that the Selfridges were going that minute, and dragged him away. I have a feeling, however, that I'll come to know about it sometime — something tells me so. It's too dark for drawing — more light for that face," and closing the book, unconscious of how she had made

her little sister's heart beat, she added next breath, "You've gotten yourself into business, Penny! Stella means to have you manage her party."

"Is Stella to have a party?" bright notes finding their way suddenly into her voice. Mrs. Stuart, bending toward her, with both hands on the chair-arm, said quickly: "What else could I do, Penny? If one little girl has a party, the others must. And yours was such a success!"

"Stella couldn't rest till she had the promise," Helen said.

"Stella wants to shine, too. But she isn't sure of being quite splendid unless you have the management. I offered a suggestion, but my lady shook her small, decided head. 'You needn't say a word, Grace,' said she, 'I shall let Penny do it all. I mean to have it just exactly as Penny thinks. Nobody can do half so well as Penny.'"

"Did she say that?" said Penny, the delight of it bringing a pleased look into the little face the fading light touched softly.

"That isn't the half. There never was such a party — the loveliest time — everybody said so — they were all so happy, didn't she, Marcia?"

"Yes, indeed. But we all did! And we meant exactly what we said, dearie."

"I'm glad my party was nice," Penelope said, plaiting and unplaiting a fold of the white dress. "And I'm very glad Stella is to have a party, too."

When she was in bed, and they had kissed her affectionately and gone downstairs, this thought kept returning to her. It was beautiful to feel she had made it possible for Stella to have a party. Already in the gladness of it the incident which had despoiled her for a time of the delight she had had in her own party began to lose its significance. "Had I known," she mused regretfully, "that there was a Christian Scientist here, he would have helped me to remember that God is everywhere and I am His perfect child — and it never would have happened. But," with a sudden thought, "how lovely that there was a Christian Scientist here! They seem to be coming about me — I have seen two!"

Her thoughts were interrupted by a light, springing step, and Mr. Stuart came into the room.

"Papa!" she cried out joyfully, "I hoped you would come."

"Why didn't you invite me then? I came to return the kiss."

Penelope flung her arms about his neck as he bent over her, and drew the strong, handsome

face down beside her own. There was always something of cheer and helpfulness in her father's mere presence.

"God is good, isn't He, papa?" she said presently.

"Never doubt it, little one."

"Then we ought to see good everywhere, oughtn't we, papa? Because God is everywhere."

There was a little silence. Mr. Stuart smoothed the cheek so near his own, with the comforting touch that belonged to Marcia as well; but there was an additional quality, strength it might be, in the touch of his fingers, which hers did not possess. Finally he said, "You remember the old woman who lived in a shoe?"

"Yes," she answered softly, listening intently.

"It was the fault of the shoe. Outside there was a wide horizon. It is rather a mistake to live in a shoe, but we can't seem to help it."

She lay quietly thinking of this when he was gone. It struck her that for a while the shoe had seemed to be all there was. "If I had been remembering I am God's perfect child, I wouldn't have minded one bit when Dickie said that," she thought. "But I just let the seems-to-be have its way."

Stella whisked in.

"Oh, Penny," she cried, "you know, don't you? We are just sitting down to dinner, but mamma said I might come up for a minute. I'm *so* excited I can't keep still! Isn't it splendid? You will see to it, won't you, Penny? Everybody says yours was the *ni*-cest party. All my friends think you're a wonder — and so you are, and a dear, too. Oh, Sally Damon came over to see Agnes, and brought this from Dick, for you. Such writing — and spelling too! p-i-e, you can't see it in this light. As though you are a sort of pie — Penelo-pie. And *such* a picture! Did you ever? What *did* he do it for?"

Penelope knew, and when she was alone, crept over to one of the western windows, and in the failing light made out with some difficulty the scrawling, badly spelled little note.

"I had a jolly tim," it ran. "I think your orful nice. I made a pictur. The girl is you. Your throwing an apple into the air. I come a long with corn silk in my mouth and mak you larf."

Poor little Dick! Penelope stood with the peace-offering in her hand and looked out at the evening sky. "I'm sorry I let him see he

hurt me," she thought regretfully. "It was foolish to be hurt — it was foolish to feel I needed cheering up. I needed nothing of the kind. I was forgetting. I let the seems-to-be have it all its own way. I didn't remember that I am God's perfect child, and that Love is the *only* power."

Turning, she caught sight of the rim of the moon pushing above the horizon, and trotting across the room, sat down on the low seat where she had sat that evening, when the east was rosy and the pink clouds overhead went slowly sailing — sailing.

It was aways a wonderful thing to Penelope to see the great round full moon come up from below that line of darkness, which still seemed to her very much like the edge of the world, whatever the geographies might say on the subject, and to watch it float upward, with majestic stillness and steadiness, through the dark ether, among the stars.

"I wonder," thought she, "whom you shone upon before you came to shine on me, you great, round, golden moon — you wonderful, shining moon! I hope you found some one who was happy. It always seems to me *every*body must be happy — when I'm happy myself; and that

nobody is happy when I am not — happiness seems a cheat then. But I ought to be happy all the time now, knowing what I know — and I have been, only for this little while when I listened to error. I won't listen again. I'll hold on hard to what I know is true, and not pay a bit of attention to what error says."

There was a whippoorwill singing in the distance. Penelope liked to hear the whippoorwills, and this was the first one she had heard this year, so she craned her neck a little, eagerly, to see the wood where she thought he must be. It looked dark and sombre against the sky, but she recalled its hazy, leafing loveliness, as she had seen it that day. "It does make a difference how you look at a thing," she thought, "and what you see it through."

She said the "scientific statement of being" slowly and thoughtfully, and several other passages from "Science and Health" which she had committed to memory, and the hymn Love Hathaway had taught her. "I'm sorry I forgot," she mused, seeing the moon rise majestically, the note of the whippoorwill again in her ears. "I mean to try hard never to forget again. But it came so naturally!" She was thinking how

strange that this should be so, puzzling a little over the thought, when, a stealthy movement attracting her attention, she jerked her head sharply around, and saw Marcia at her dressing-table carefully moving some of the articles about. When she had completed her arrangements she turned slowly toward the bed; then took a hasty step forward, peering; then another, approaching by short degrees, incredulity written in every movement, as she failed to make that which she saw correspond with what she felt ought to be.

Penelope laughed softly.

"You little rogue!" cried Marcia, turning quickly. "I supposed you fast asleep, and here, instead, you are 'broad awake and staring' — like Joey B! Well, I can give it to you now — and that is nicer than leaving it for you to find in the morning. I had put it where you would see it the first thing — the ring, you know. It came while we were at dinner, with many regrets on Mr. Smith's part that he failed to get it here last night. But we don't mind — do we? It is just as nice having it now as it would have been this morning — isn't it? Every bit. That is the way with disappointments. They haven't anything like the misery-making power we think

they have. It would be well if we could remember this at the time, wouldn't it, dearie? Now let us have that little finger — there! Isn't it pretty? Do you like it? Kiss Marcia for it — and you must wear it, sweetheart, every day, for my sake, till I come home next year."

Penelope wound her arm about Marcia's neck, as she knelt by her side, and they remained quite silent for a time. The lawn shimmered in a lovely way, in the silvery light of the moon, making the shadows seem very dark and dense.

"Hear the whippoorwill," said Marcia, finally.

"Yes," returned Penelope, thinking evidently of something else. Then she said. "I like to have presents of gold, Marcia."

"Do you?" Marcia said, pinching her little thin cheeks.

"Does gold mean love, Marcia?"

Marcia considered.

"It may," she said, "I shouldn't wonder. Do you think it does?"

"Dr. Chadwick said so, once."

"Then of course it does. Dr. Chadwick knows. Think of asking *me* to bolster Dr. Chadwick's views!"

Marcia laughed, but there was no answering

gleam on the thoughtful little face the moonlight touched so brightly, and Marcia, looking at Penelope, as Penelope looked at the moon, grew silent again, wondering of what Penelope was thinking, to look so serious, and if it meant another question which she might possibly find it difficult to answer.

The question came presently.

"If," said Penelope, very slowly and gravely, "one never looked at anything but what was beautiful, and never thought of anything but the beautiful, what would happen?"

"What a question! Why, Penny, you would stagger Dr. Chadwick — not to say a whole Divinity School!"

Then seeing how much in earnest her little sister was, she said with quick thought: "I should think one would need to be very beautiful one's self to start with — perfectly beautiful, you know — else there would be something not beautiful which *must* be looked at and thought about."

"Oh, yes," said Penelope, catching at the idea. "I see that. God is perfectly beautiful — isn't He, Marcia?"

A shocked expression flitted across Marcia's face. It seemed almost profane to refer to these

mysteries. "Why — yes," she answered, "He *is* beauty, I suppose."

"Then He can't make anything that isn't beautiful," said Penelope, solemnly, "and everything that *is*, must *be* beautiful."

"Penny, you mustn't say there is anything God *can't* do!"

Penelope turned her face quickly, and said, as she brushed a little curl back from Marcia's forehead. "I didn't mean to say anything wrong. I didn't know it was wrong to say God couldn't make bad things."

"Well, it is not," said Marcia, with sudden conviction. Then, not seeing her way out, and fearing the next question, she went on hurriedly, to divert Penelope's thought: —

"Hear that whippoorwill. It is pleasant to hear them again; you like to hear them, don't you, dearie? How beautiful the moon is! It is so quiet, too — can you hear that little murmur, now and then, through the pine tree?" She left her place by Penelope's chair, and resting one hand on the window-sill, bent, listening, with her face turned back to Penelope. "Hear it?" she said with a lingering intonation. "That is your lullaby. Isn't it sweet? You ought to be

in bed, too. Think of it — sitting here in the moonlight, when they suppose you fast asleep! And what do you imagine they will think has become of me? But I can't go down till I see you safely in bed, sweetheart."

Penelope, smiling, suffered Marcia to assist her to bed; and then, as she bent to kiss her, threw both arms about her neck, and said: —

"Oh, Marcia, dear, I know that God is good — and Love the only power."

"Why — Penny — dear," Marcia began, and stopped.

"We are God's perfect children," said Penelope, with decision.

Marcia paused a minute before responding. She really did not know how to answer. Penelope was waiting to hear what she would say. She was unwilling to deny, yet afraid to affirm. There were curious, wavering inflections in her voice as she said: "Why — yes, dearie, in a way."

"I was taught that," said Penelope, quaking, longing yet dreading to have Marcia ask by whom.

"Taught it?"

"Yes."

There was a half startled, pondering expression on the face bending over her that Penelope could clearly make out. She wondered of what she was thinking. It was strange to her that Marcia should not understand; that she did not question who had taught her this great truth. But she did not.

"You are taught a great many things, little sister," she said, with utmost tenderness, putting back the thin hair and kissing Penelope's forehead. "All of us need to be taught."

"Divine Love does teach us," said Penelope. She came near adding, "Love Hathaway told me that," but the words died away upon her lips.

"Yes. I dare say, dearie, more, far more, than we realize."

"Everybody, I mean."

"Yes, everybody."

"Only," said Penelope, earnestly, "we don't know what messages come to people, or when they get them, or anything about it. But when we hear them real plain, the discords have to go."

"The — what?"

"Discords. Things that *seem* to be! Doesn't the Bible say, 'We are of God,' Marcia?"

"I think so."

"Then that settles it," conclusively. "Don't you see," with an anxious intonation, she so longed to have Marcia understand, "if we know *real plain* that we are of God, the discords *have* to go? They are errors. It's like mistakes in music, Marcia! You know I make fearful discords sometimes, but after I have learned the piece, I don't know anything about them. They weren't there, anyway; and the moment I get it right they drop out of my thought. I'd be foolish to hold on to them, wouldn't I?" with sudden scorn.

Marcia made no comment, only smoothed the thin hair gently, with a troubled look in her face, Penelope could still make out.

"The deformity seems to have gone, anyway," Penelope said abruptly, and Marcia started. "I mean," she explained, feeling the shock her words had given, "I'm so happy inside; I'm getting so straight there, where I used to be crooked, I don't seem to know about having a deformed body. I just *know* God is good, and I'm His perfect child — and that Love is the *only* power."

Marcia went downstairs with faltering steps, turned back at intervals by an inclination to go to Penelope again and reason her into a different

frame of mind. But the consideration that she was uncertain what frame of mind it was desirable she should be brought into, as well as a vagueness as to what she should be brought out from, deterred her from acting on the impulse, and after halting irresolutely several times, and then going on again, she decided to let the matter rest until morning, and went into the drawing-room, trusting that with the morning light there would come to her a clearer understanding of what was amiss in Penelope's way of thinking and speaking, and how she could most tenderly put her right.

But the next day Penelope was bright and happy, without a vestige of the dejection which had troubled them on the night before; simply and naturally herself again, with an added degree, if it may be so expressed, of the new joyousness they were fast becoming familiar with as belonging to Penelope. Marcia watched sharply, but finding nothing in speech or action that could be looked upon as out of the way, smiled at her own foolish fears. Still it was a marvel Penelope could have spoken so lightly of her deformity. In all her life Marcia had never heard her refer to it before.

## CHAPTER VII

### SKETCHES

The bright days flew by on golden wings. To Penelope the world had never seemed half so beautiful before. There were so many hitherto unsuspected charms: every bud and leaflet had a new message of love and loveliness. She studied her Bible and "Science and Health" with ever increasing devotion; the "scientific statement of being" was often on her lips, and always, like a refrain, in her heart. She was losing her self-consciousness; she often sat in the midst of the family, thinking over what she had been reading in "Science and Health," repeating to herself the "Lord's Prayer, with its spiritual interpretation," the "scientific statement of being" or other passages which she had committed to memory, without a thought that her preoccupation might attract attention.

She was sitting in this silent way among her sisters, on the lawn, one bright June morning, her

thoughts busy with the subject so near her heart, when Helen, who had glanced at her curiously several times, suddenly said: —

"Penny, what are you thinking of? You look like a dear little saint making a meditation."

Penelope started and flushed, and cast an embarrassed glance around. Marcia, her back against the seamed trunk of an old elm, with a youthful play of its own leaves slanting across it (with an effect like that of a flitting smile over the face of an aged dreamer) looked up from her book; Grace paused in her sketching; Agnes, on the ground near Penelope, turned her head over her shoulder; and Stella checked herself in the act of pulling down a branch of the syringa, the other hand upraised to pluck the blossom.

"Confess, Penny," insisted Helen, playfully, jogging slowly in the little rocking-chair she had brought out for her greater comfort. "Of what were you thinking?"

"Why," began Penelope, crimsoning to find herself the centre of all eyes, "I can't — that is — well, partly — isn't there a verse in the Bible about putting off the old man?"

"Dear me! I'm not sure," said Helen, considering. "Yes, there is," Grace interrupted. "Dr.

Chadwick read it last Sunday. You put off the *old* man as fast as you put *on* the new — and no faster. That is the gist of it! I thought we had better all be up and attending to business."

"My! Aren't you irreverent!" said Stella.

"It's no sign she's irreverent because she doesn't drawl and talk through her nose," said Agnes.

"Thanks, Agnes. You can sit down, Stella, metaphorically speaking. But stand as you are, if you please, in the literal sense of the verb 'to be stationary,' while I catch your pose. Oh, not so stiff! That's always the way!" complainingly. "The minute you see I am doing you, you get as rigid as a poker. Limber up — get a little grace into the outline — oh-h-h! You do it, Agnes! No — you needn't come. That's better! stand right where you are — it's fine! And Stella's head will fit on beautifully."

"I'm not going to have my head on Agnes's body!"

"But it's o-o-on!" making a quick scratch or two.

"You take great liberties," pouted Stella, picking the sprig of syringa, and releasing the branch.

"I like detached bits," Grace returned coolly,

"a mortal as a whole is generally disappointing; but a nose here and a chin there — really, you can get up something fine. I always take Helen's ears. I have done them so many times I know them by heart. Really, my dear, I don't think you know what shell-like appendages they are. Oh — no! But I avoid long-eared subjects as far as possible."

"I don't care, it *was* irreverent!" said Stella, returning to her former objection, "rattling on in the way you were, and saying Bible verses in the same breath. What would Dr. Chadwick say, I wonder?"

"Scold you for not guiding me better."

Stella tossed her small, well-poised head. "He never has scolded me yet," she said.

"He doesn't know of your flagrant neglect. However, Stella, you'll do. Stick to your Catechism and you'll come out all right — if it is the best you know. The trouble lies in sticking to it when you have seen something better."

Helen said: "What heresy!" with a soft little laugh. "Think of Dr. Chadwick hearing you intimate there is anything better than the Catechism!"

Grace paid no heed to Helen's remark, and was unconscious of Penelope's suddenly questioning

gaze. She was sketching busily, glancing at Agnes as her pencil moved, but there was an unwonted seriousness in her tone, as she added, "If we do as well as we know how, we'll have light enough to go by, I guess."

When Grace released Agnes, she turned to Penelope and beckoned coaxingly with her forefinger: "Come, Penny," she said, "let's go down to the stream. What a morning it is! I can smell a thousand flowers, I do believe. And the birds — I never heard the bobolinks sing as they do this year!"

"Bird orchestras," said Helen, with a sly glance at Grace.

"I thought you didn't see the point!"

"Oh — that was then, and this is now."

"I told you you would see it eventually — but I didn't feel sure."

"Some things take time," Helen returned demurely, and Grace retorted: —

"That is why I didn't feel sure of your ever seeing it!"

During this little dialogue Penelope made her escape. She dreaded further questioning by Helen, and ran away happily with Agnes, down through the shadowy old orchard, where the scat-

tered daisies showed like snowflakes among the heavy grass. Marcia looked after them thoughtfully. What was it, she wondered, about Penelope, of late, so difficult of comprehension? She looked the same, and yet in some strange fashion not the same. There was a freedom and joyousness in her movements now, easy of detection, as she trotted down the path through the orchard, behind Agnes, holding out her hands on either side to let the tall grass slip through them as she went along, that was new, but which at the same time she recognized in a vague, undefinable way, as belonging to her. It was not strange, it did not strike her as novel — and yet it was new! She had lost her sensitiveness, too, now that she thought of it — that old shrinking way of watching lest she should be observed; the dread of being looked at — when had she detected anything of the kind in her? The discovery that these familiar characteristics were wholly gone amazed her. "It must have been that spiritual uplifting," thought she. "Dear Penny! I am sure it was a wonderful experience, from the light in her little face. It has lifted her above the torment her bodily deformity used to bring."

The family had unconsciously ceased petting and pitying Penelope. When, they could not have told, nor why. Her case had always demanded pity — they would have been a little shocked, no doubt, had it been put to them in so many words that they no longer pitied her.

Marcia was roused from her revery by an exclamation from Grace. "Why!" she said, holding out her sketch-book, "it's Penny — see!"

Marcia nodded, smiling. The declaration was so in line with her own thought of Penelope at the moment, she was unconscious to what she was assenting.

Stella looked over Grace's shoulder, then glanced from one to the other wonderingly. "Why — it isn't!" said she.

"It is," said Grace.

"It — *isn't*," contradicted Stella.

Grace paid no further heed to Stella, but holding the sketch at arm's length, and looking at it critically, went on: "It isn't Stella, you see — though it's Stella's head, and it isn't Agnes — though it's Agnes's body, but it *is* Penny! I don't know how I know it — but I do. It is Penny — as she *ought to be*."

They were silent for a time. No sound broke

the stillness save the droning of the bees in the syringa. Even the birds were mute for the moment. Then Grace burst out impetuously: —

"Don't tell me God made Penny deformed! I don't believe a word of it — as though He would spoil His own work! I can't explain it — but I know He didn't do it. I have thought this lots of times — now I've said it — and I'll stick to it."

"Oh-h — *aren't* you wicked!" cried Stella, round-eyed with horror. "I should think you would be frightened — to say God didn't make Penny!"

"I said He didn't make her deformed — and He didn't!"

"That is just the same as saying He didn't make her — for she *is* deformed."

"I don't know about that!"

"Why — Grace Stuart!"

Disregarding the reproof, not to say condemnation implied in Stella's tone, Grace went on quietly touching up her sketch. "Do you remember," she said presently, "the blue hills we can see from Grandma Finson's house? Well, I used to lie on that sloping lawn. And what a slope it seemed! Quite a pitch! to run down which, without falling on my nose, was a feat indeed. I remember the road used to seem in quite a valley as I looked

down upon it. But ah me! things change. It is disillusioned now — quite commonplace — nothing but an incline, and not much of an incline at that! You see, Stella, I was a child then, and things look so large to children. They make so much of little things — magnify them. They can't help it! Their eyes are regular magnifying glasses, I suspect."

"I know what you mean," said Stella, with a toss of her little head. "But I am not a child, though I know you mean I am."

Grace groaned. "So far from it, I have to do something like this," making a telescope of her two hands and bringing it to her eye, "to get you into range with the idea — and even then I don't get it clear. Why, Stella, to say you're as old as your grandmother — "

"What about the hills?" interrupted Helen, the peacemaker. "We are waiting to hear about those blue hills."

Stella went back to her seat on the terrace steps, which she had quitted to look at the sketch, and gathered her scattered white daisies upon her lap again. But she had an offended look, and Marcia smoothed her ruffled plumage with a smile, a certain lifting of the eyebrows, and a curious

pucker and motion about the lips, which seemed in a soundless way to say: "What a ridiculous girl Grace is! She loves to tease — but who minds! and how pretty she looks, with her sunny head bent over that beloved sketch-book, and the breeze fluttering those little curls about her brow!" And Stella, looking through the glasses thus proffered for her use, grew pacific, and listened respectfully, when Grace, after a minute's thought, said: —

"Why, I used to sit out on that bank in front of grandma's house, and look and look at those hills, until I didn't feel sure whether I really saw them, or only thought I did. And I would wonder what they really were like, and whether, if I could get to them, they would bear any resemblance to what I seemed to see; or if, after all, the hills and the trees — and myself for the matter of that — weren't merely thoughts, without any real existence — something that only seemed to be. It used to give me the queerest feeling!"

"No wonder," said Helen, "I should think it might. You were always the queerest child."

"I have had some such thoughts about things in later years," Grace went on, laying her pencil against her rosy lips, as she looked dreamily away across the river. "Who knows that we see things

as they really are, when we read about 'the new heavens and the new earth' that St. John saw — and other things just like it? *I* don't!"

"You visionary child," smiled Helen, pausing, with her arm drawn out the length of her thread to look at Grace. "Do you remember how you used to startle me with your fancies? I am used to them now; but you used to scare me blue."

"You're easily scared," returned Grace, prodding the earth with the blunt end of her pencil, and looking dissatisfied. "I never get my questions answered to my satisfaction — except by papa. He's a comforting individual! Do you remember what he told us about the seeds?" she was looking at Marcia, "that each grows up into its own vision?"

"Into its own vision?" repeated Helen, questioningly.

"A pansy seed into a pansy; a poppy into a poppy; a sweet-pea into a sweet-pea," said Grace, with elaborate emphasis. "See? You can't imagine a little forget-me-not seed having a vision of a stately dahlia in its heart! So everything is satisfied — working up into the one thing it sees."

Helen made a little grimace, and shook her

head on the sly at Stella, pulling daisy petals and scattering them upon her lap, as she sat on the terrace steps. "My dear, I'll follow you as far as I can," she said, "but I'm really afraid that isn't very far."

Grace shrugged her shoulders and made no answer. Marcia added a little comment: "We can *express* what we can see. We can't *see* more than we are capable of doing," she said.

"You're a perfect inspiration!" Grace exclaimed. Then, catching sight of Stella, made a dive for her sketch-book on one side, and the pencil, sticking point upward in the ground, on the other, and began to sketch. Stella was thinking, or had been listening, perhaps, for she had paused, without removing her eyes from the daisy, held lightly in one hand, while the thumb and forefinger of the other pressed one of its white petals.

"Of how many moods are you capable to the minute, Grace?" Helen asked, with a soft, rippling little laugh, pleasant to hear.

"That depends. But variety is the spice of life!" She talked on rapidly to keep Stella in that listening attitude, her pencil moving quickly, her eyes darting back and forth from her paper

to the graceful little figure on the step. "But it wouldn't do to have all spice — far from it! a little of this, a little of that. Oh, what will you put in the old man's soup? — And what will *you* put in the old man's soup? — And what will *you* put in the old man's soup? — and so on. In the end it comes out quite a delightful thing."

"I don't know why the old man's soup should remind me of Hannah," said Helen, with her pleasant laugh, "but it seems to. What is the matter with her — does any one know? She seems so mysterious! I hardly ever hear her speak; she seems afraid to say a word."

"Hannah?" said Marcia, with a surprised look.

"Yes. Haven't you noticed it? She acts as though she were hiding something — as though she had some weighty secret on her mind. Mamma spoke to me about it; she's afraid she is anxious about Penny, but I told her that could not be. Penny is unusually well and bright."

"Did you persuade her?" asked Marcia, a little anxiously.

"Yes," Helen answered, with a quick glance. "Why, don't you think it is true?"

"Yes, indeed. I was only anxious to know if

you made mamma feel that it is. She worries so over Penny — or always has. There they are now!" with a nod of her head toward the orchard. "How happy Penny looks!" She was leading, this time, looking back over her shoulder every now and then at Agnes as they talked.

"It is beautiful in the orchard this morning," said Grace, "the shadows are so lovely. I suspect there are violets still among the deep grass in that corner by the stone wall. I mean to go and look by and by. That is a lovely bit of coloring further down, next the meadow — it's a tangle of buttercups and clover. You would never be able to tell from here what it is — I had to go down to satisfy myself. There, Stella Stuart, if you wish to go down to posterity as a miracle of infantile loveliness, keep this sketch!"

Stella looked up with a start, and flushed. "Why didn't you tell me?" she said pettishly.

"Because I wasn't looking for a model for shovels and pokers or anything describable by stiff, stiffer, stiffest. Now, I have you! How is the stream?" as Penelope and Agnes came up the steps.

"Oh, lovely! Penny is learning to row — only the sun was too hot. We're going to get up early

to-morrow morning and go down, aren't we, Penny?"

"Yes," beamed Penelope. "It's such fun!"

Agnes exclaimed over the sketch, and Penelope added: —

"Why, it's lovely! It's the prettiest sketch you ever made of her, Grace."

Stella got up from her seat on the step, the daisies gathered into her short skirt, and looked over Grace's shoulder.

"Seems to me the hair is flyie," she observed critically.

"You would like to have smoothed it, wouldn't you?" laughed Agnes. "You are the queerest girl about your hair — why, it's lovely having it so fluffy!"

"Yes," agreed Penelope. "It is so pretty. I think it is beautiful, Stella."

It occurred to Marcia that once, and not so very long ago either, when Penelope made these little complimentary speeches, a wistful, pained expression was wont to steal over her little face. But there was nothing of that to-day, only the most genuine pleasure in what seemed beautiful to her. Was this, she asked herself, the change she felt in her? She leaned forward in strained atten-

tion, to catch the expression of Penelope's face, then slightly shook her head. No. It was something beyond the absence of that old, familiar, hungry wistfulness — something positive. A light breeze suddenly fluttered the leaves of the sketch-book, leaving it open as if by design in passing, at the drawing Grace had said was like Penelope "as she ought to be."

"Oh!" said Penelope in an admiring tone. Grace looked at Marcia. "Who is it?" she asked, glancing back at Penelope.

"Not exactly like any of you," she answered, still looking at the sketch. "I thought at first it was Helen, but I see it is not. I suppose it is the one you were making of Agnes and Stella. It is like each of them — I believe it is a little like you all."

"Grace says it is like you," Stella announced, and quickly grew round-eyed with horror, as Agnes pulled her sleeve warningly and Helen shook her head. She was quite frightened. The words had escaped her unthinkingly, and she felt the little tremor that had seized them all. But before a word could be spoken, if there were anything that could be said, Penelope looked up with a smile. She was on her knees before the

sketch-book, which was lying on the ground, and she said, with incredulity in look and tone : —

"Like me?" The surprise was, that this confirmation of the hope in her heart should come from them. Then, with a certain inscrutable something coming into her face that was not recognition, though akin to it, and not appropriation, though there was a suggestion of that, she cast her eyes down upon the sketch, still kneeling upright, and said with a smile that might be from coyness, or might be a delicate assent to this surprising proposition, "I shall like to look like this."

"*Shall*," Grace mentally ejaculated, looking at Penelope with her bright young face full of wonder.

Penelope turned to the sketch of Stella sitting upon the steps, and looked from one to the other, comparing them. "You changed the head, didn't you?" she said. "It is more like Helen than Stella; though it's like Stella, too — only older."

"She takes liberties with my head," giggled Stella. She was so relieved that she hadn't made Penelope cry, she was ready to laugh over Grace's presumption. "She puts it anywhere she takes a notion; and makes it old or makes it young; and thinks it's dreadful because I want it to go with my own body."

"It is trying to the sensibilities, when one of the family has a preference for 'bits,' isn't it, Stella?" said Helen.

Agnes said:—

"Well, you ought to be pleased, Stella; for it is like Helen. It's a prophecy perhaps — you're always wishing you may look like Helen."

"Yes, I do," said Stella. "I hope I'll look just like her. She's the prettiest one in the family."

"Well, Miss Vanity, don't forget that 'pretty is that pretty does,'" cautioned Grace.

Sally Damon appearing, Agnes and Stella went into the house with her, to show the new sofa pillows and couch covers for their room at Sweetbrier, the Stuarts' seashore home; Helen followed, and Penelope stole away.

"Shall," said Grace, with marked intonation, and a lift of her pretty brows.

Marcia nodded. "We know very little of all that is in the heart, even of those who are nearest us," she added, as though thinking aloud, rather than speaking to Grace.

"True enough," said Grace. "There are lots of *alones*. As many alones as there are people, I suspect."

Marcia, with a musing expression on her face, was looking away across the meadow to where, at one end of the pine grove, there was the glinting of a sunlit field beyond, between the tall, straight trunks of the thinning trees. Intensely warm and golden this hint of the sunshine which flooded the field seemed, as she saw it, amid the green-black, shadowy depths of the grove; and she was thinking that from out the brightness of a world we do not know there might come into the world of shadows we do know, gleams from that brightness, fraught with transforming power. And she recalled that the face of one man, upon whom this light had fallen, had shone so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look thereon; and she remembered the words of him who spake as never man spake, "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come to you."

Grace broke into her thoughts. "I'm going to give this sketch to Penny, to pin up in her room at Sweetbrier," she said. "Don't you think she will like it?"

"She seemed to," said Marcia. Her eyes met Grace's, and something which was not — could not be, perhaps — put into words passed between

them. It made her pick a spray of the syringa and hand it to Grace. "Put it with the sketch when you give it to her," she said.

Penelope was not in her room, and Grace laid the flowers across one corner of the sketch, which she left on the table. Hannah came in, and she pointed to it. "To pin up in Penny's room at Sweetbrier," she said. Hannah squinted at it, her brows contracting. "It isn't any of us," Grace explained. "At least—" she hesitated. But Hannah was one of the family; none of the children remembered a time when she was not with them. "I said it was the way Penny *ought* to be," she added, "and Stella told her."

"Told her!" with a gasp.

"It was all right, Hannah! Penny didn't mind."

"Didn't she — she didn't cry?"

"No, she didn't cry. She didn't even seem surprised, Hannah!"

Then Hannah surprised Grace very much, by keeling over upon the couch at the foot of Penelope's bed, and sobbing like a child.

"Why, what's the matter?" Grace said quickly, bending over her. "What is it, Hannah?"

"Don't ask me," came the smothered answer.

"But what are you crying for? There is noth-

ing to cry for! Do you think Penny — why Penny liked it!"

Hannah sprang up. "Don't say a word about this," half coaxingly, yet with an air of command. "I didn't mean to do it — I meant *not* to do it! But don't tell it; don't say a word." Grace's mystified eyes followed the woman's hasty flight. "Well I never!" she slowly ejaculated. "What is it she meant not to do — and seems to feel she has done, I wonder?" After a minute she added: "Helen isn't far out of the way in thinking something has come over Hannah! But what? — that's the question." Then in a slow, pondering tone, "Does she think Penny — " The sentence was not finished, but Grace stood some time looking steadily at the sketch.

At the same time Penelope, in the pine grove, was saying softly to herself, over and over, "The law of the Spirit of life — the law of the Spirit of life"— trying to grasp an illusive something which came up to the border-land of her understanding, so to speak, and then evaded her utmost effort to make it her own. "The law of the Spirit of life." She was sitting upon the brown needle-carpet, her knees slightly drawn up, with "Science and Health," open, resting upon them. Before her

was a golden vista of the shining field, glimpses of which Marcia had caught through the distant trunks of the sombre-looking trees. There were few things in the pine grove itself to catch and give back the sunshine. It fell in broad patches here and there, but with the effect of being spread out thin and flat. It had a wan appearance. There was nothing to shimmer and glint in token of its presence, save at wide intervals, where a hopeful acorn had sent up a few glossy leaves.

"Still, it is here," mused Penelope. "It isn't the fault of the sunshine that it hasn't the effect it has in the sunny field."

A soft pad as of horses' feet on spongy ground caused Penelope to turn her head, and slowly winding along a grass-grown old road at the foot of the slope, where the pine trees ended and a growth of young oaks began, she saw Rosamond Selfridge and her cousin Nicholas, in Rosamond's pretty turnout.

"Ho-hoo-o!" she called out.

"Ho-hoo-o!" came the response; and Rosamond turned her head slowly about, searching for the owner of the voice. Then she spied Penelope, on the highest ridge in the grove, among the great trees, and kissed her white fingers and shook

them toward her, and kissed them again and shook them. Then she said something to Nicholas — Penelope knew this from the turn of her head to him — and ill-conditioned Nicholas slouched around and slightly raised his hat.

He was a boy of ten or twelve, but very tall and large. Penelope had always been afraid of him; until recently nothing more terrible could happen to her than having to face Nicholas Selfridge. Most children avoided him; they had no liking for his surly ways.

"Poor boy!" said Penelope, waving her hand wildly, in her desire to show him how friendly she felt when he lifted his hat in that pitiful fashion — so slightly one could scarce be sure he raised it at all. She did not pause to consider why she did this, nor why she felt so sorry for him in her heart. How beautiful Rosamond looked, with that soft, greenish light falling about her! Rosamond was always beautiful in Penelope's eyes.

She watched, with a pleased light in her face, while they wound along the leafy way, dappled by sunshine and shadow, hidden at times from her view by the scrubby growth of oak pushing up among the pines, answering brightly as

Rosamond, turning from time to time, waved her hand or cried "Ho-hoo-o," in token that she could still see the little figure on the ridge among the pines.

They had been lost to her sight for some minutes, when, with sudden wonder, she exclaimed, joyfully: —

"Why, *nothing* would have tempted me to do that three months ago. Nothing!" Yet it had been a perfectly natural and simple act. "Then," she mused, "I should have crept away when I saw them, and hidden behind a tree for fear they would see me, but now — I didn't know I was going to call. I did it as naturally as Helen would, or Grace, or Stella."

Marcia sent covert glances across at her as they sat at lunch. "Penelope's smile has a twilight now," she thought. "It used to come quickly — a sweet little smile — but flit before one scarce could see it. Now it lingers."

Her mind was divided between this thought and her occupation, later in the afternoon, when her mother bustled into her room.

"Well, Marcia," she exclaimed, dropping into a chair, "what do you suppose? You know the Hathaways?"

There was an expression on Marcia's face of having to bring her faculties from a distance, and of its taking time. "Hathaways?" she repeated blankly. It seemed to suggest nothing.

"Yes — Weehaukn — you know. I told you, your father said a day or two ago that the place is still open, didn't I? It made little impression last spring. Well," as Marcia shook her head, "I think I did. Your mind was probably somewhere else. But the most surprising thing is — they have become *Christian Scientists!*"

Marcia was instantly alert.

"Yes, they have," Mrs. Stuart repeated with emphasis. "Your father has just come from there. He hasn't been by the place for — I don't know how long. Years, I'm sure — he never seemed to like passing it, somehow, until the other day when he discovered the changes there. Then he went over to-day and called — now he wants me to go with him. But I can't, of course, till we get back. Only two days before we go to Sweetbrier, and all the packing, and so many things to put away, and the 'good-by's.' I meant to have asked Mrs. Selfridge about Jack Prescott and Christian Science, but it slipped my mind. I must do it now."

"But, mamma — you know what Grace said!"

"What did Grace say?"

"About the item the Selfridges are not making public."

"What did you remind me for?" impatiently. "I had forgotten. I didn't half hear what was said that night, anyway. But of course I wouldn't intentionally pry into a thing they wish to keep to themselves. I would like to know, though, what it really is, just for curiosity's sake. Your father says they are so serene and happy. They have but recently embraced the faith."

"It must be something very good," said Marcia, with a thought of Penelope's questions about the Hathaways, and the Christian Science church in Boston.

"But, Marcia, they have left the church! Not that that means much, for they have never been since their daughter died."

Marcia said nothing. There seemed nothing she could say.

"They didn't tell Jerome anything about it," Mrs. Stuart trailed on presently, arranging the fall of lace on the front of her light silk gown, "beyond the fact that they had become Christian Scientists, and that Christian Science had changed

their lives. Oh, yes! their son's wife had been healed — that is the term they used — healed of consumption long ago."

"If it can heal consumption, it can do anything!" said Marcia, quickly, with a look on her face which made her mother say, aghast, "Mercy, Marcia — don't!"

"Don't what?" Marcia said, smiling. "It must be a wonderful religion, mamma, that can cure consumption, and make people, whose lives have been embittered as the Hathaways' lives were, serene and happy."

"But it is not of the church, Marcia. You see how the Selfridges feel."

"Perhaps the Selfridges do not understand. It must be a good thing that can cure the sick, and lift the burden from those who are sad of heart. It's like Jesus' work!"

"Marcia — don't," said Mrs. Stuart, shocked. "You are as bad as your father!" Marcia had heard this many times, and took her desk into her confidence with a little smile. "He frightens me sometimes," Mrs. Stuart went on in an injured tone. "He asked me just now if it wasn't a good thing to raise the dead — such a startling question!"

Marcia was still holding her pen, and scratched

with it aimlessly, as she answered, "You must think it is, mamma."

"I think it is not a pleasant subject to discuss," her mother returned with sudden decision. "There are more agreeable topics. I want you, Marcia, not to speak of this to the girls, — nor let your father know I mentioned it to you. Let the whole thing drop. I'll take the summer to think what to do with the Hathaways. They are elderly people, and I would like to be nice to them — but it's dreadful to leave the church." The subject was disposed of; and leaning slightly sidewise, touching with her soft white fingers a book open on the desk before Marcia, she went on in an altered tone: "The list is growing fast, isn't it? I do hope we shan't forget anybody we ought to invite; those mistakes so often occur at weddings."

"It doesn't seem possible there *can* be an omission," said Marcia, puckering her brows as she looked down at the book. "I am continually racking my brains, and rushing up here when I get a name, as though the house were on fire, to jot it down before I forget. And Helen and I are perpetually comparing lists — names other people furnish, you know."

"It won't be so much work for the other girls,"

Mrs. Stuart returned complacently, "because we'll have your list. O dear!" with one of her quick changes in manner, "how dreadful to think of the old empty nest!"

Marcia laughed out merrily. "The flitting will be gradual," she consoled. "Stella is only nine."

"You don't realize how fast children grow up," her mother answered. "It seems only yesterday you were nine yourself. But I shall always have Penny!" with that quick shadow Penelope's name was almost sure to cast falling over her. Marcia, thinking of the sketch, and of that subtle change in Penelope of late, did not feel sure of this. But she kept her own counsel.

"However," added Mrs. Stuart, coming suddenly from under the cloud, "I don't mean to despond. I am happy in your happiness. George is a fine fellow."

"Oh — I'm satisfied," Marcia said, with a soft little laugh.

"The only trouble is, Boston is so out of the world!" complained her mother.

"Mamma!" laughed Marcia, adding, "There are Boston people who feel *Maine* is out of the world."

"Oh — well," shrugged Mrs. Stuart, commiserating their benighted condition.

As they were going in to dinner that evening, Stella sidled up to Penelope and whispered: "Grace has given me the sketch of me to pin up in my room at Sweetbrier. I'm *awful* proud of it — aren't you proud of yours?"

"I'm pleased," returned Penelope, with a happy look.

"What's this?" said Mr. Stuart, putting a hand upon each little shoulder, and separating the girls; then with an arm over each, drawing them close to him, Stella on one side and Penelope on the other, "secrets from papa?"

"No, not a secret from papa," Stella said quickly, "I was only telling Penny what I thought of them. Grace made a sketch of me, and one — for Penny. Want to see them? I'll get them," and not waiting for an answer, off she flew.

Returning, flushed with running, she laid them before him. "That's me," she said, with appreciation, "and that — is Penny's."

Mr. Stuart glanced at "me," then looked long and attentively at the other sketch. Penelope, wistfully happy, watched him, and meeting her eyes as he lifted his head, he gave a quick little nod and smiled brightly. But he was unusually silent during the meal.

## CHAPTER VIII

### FIREFLIES

As they left the dining room, Mr. Stuart steered Penelope, without attracting attention from the rest of the family, into the library and out through the library door upon that part of the piazza where they were least likely to be disturbed. There was something in his mind which he wished to say to the child. But once seated, with Penelope on his knee, there seemed a difficulty in beginning. He formulated sentence after sentence, but he was so uncertain of the ground upon which he was treading that they died out of his thought, unuttered.

The twilight was fast waning when they came out; shadows deepened; it was a murky night; soon it was quite dark. There were no lights on that portion of the piazza — no one was in the library, so there was no brightness to stream out from those windows; the darkness seemed to fold them about, to wrap them away from sight and sound. Penelope, with her head against her

father's shoulder, was blissfully happy. All her life it had been the greatest treat she could have, to rest in his strong arms. She gave a little sigh of content.

"What is that for?" he asked. "Are we dull?"

"Oh, no, papa," nestling her head a little closer under his own. "I'm so full of happiness — that's all."

Mr. Stuart thought he would disemburden himself of what he wished to say by working on from that point. "I hope you always will be full of happiness," he said, and there stuck.

Penelope wished she could tell him why she knew she always would be, so that he would understand; but the words in which to do this did not offer themselves, and she was too restfully content to search for them. "But I will tell him before we go in," she thought, with a little wonder that she had not already done so.

"We're not very chatty, eh?" Mr. Stuart said, after a pause.

"No," Penelope answered, a little surprised that he had noticed it. She had not. There was a beautiful sociability about these silences of theirs; talking never seemed a necessity. But Mr. Stuart's mind was restless to-night.

"There is a firefly," Penelope said presently.

"Yes. And there's another," returned her father.

Still watching the tiny, fitful sparks, she presently asked, "Did you ever go down to the stream, papa, on a dark night — it's beautiful there."

"Whew!" said her father, playfully, "what do we know about the stream on dark nights?"

"Grace tells me. She loves to go there. Agnes goes with her, and sometimes the other girls. I've always been afraid!"

There was something in her intonation as she said "I've always been afraid," that caught his attention.

"You aren't now, I suppose?" he suggested.

The reply was prompt. "No. There's nothing to be afraid of."

"Would you like to go down to the stream tonight with papa?" he asked after a minute's silence.

Penelope would have preferred remaining where they were, she was so happy, but she thought perhaps her father wished to see the place Grace thought so charming, and that settled it. "Yes," she said brightly. "You would like to go, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, I would like to go," said Mr. Stuart.

It was a wonderful experience to Penelope, traversing the dark night, holding by her father's hand, and feeling the tall heavy grass switch her skirts as she went along. The path through the orchard was made of smooth, flat stones, embedded in the earth to a level with the sod, so that it was an easy matter keeping it, and wide enough for them to walk abreast by keeping close together; but Penelope felt the tickle of the grass against her hand all the way, and now and then the heavy brush of it against her skirts when they swerved unintentionally to her side of the path. There were many fireflies now; some so near she could see the glow they made among the grass, when they showed their small, fitful lights. Then there came the soft gurgling music of the stream, and the gentle splash of the water against the supports of the little bridge — and next minute her feet were on the bridge itself.

"Oh, wasn't it lovely!" cried she, with a gleeful laugh. "I didn't know it could be so lovely coming down through the dark, and feeling so safe and taken-care-of."

She sat down on the seat midway of the bridge, which Mr. Stuart located in a manner that seemed

surprisingly clever to Penelope, and nestled close to his side. The liquid melody of the stream filled her ears; the fireflies went flashing about — watchmen as Grace called them — exploring every recess; there was a faint, far-away sound of the whippoorwill. Penelope recalled that night in May when she had listened to the whippoorwill, and been so sad, and her thoughts travelled quickly over the way by which she had come since then. There was cause for joy! She said to herself a verse of the hymn Love had taught her. It filled her with an unspeakable peace.

"We *are* of God, aren't we, papa?" she asked presently, in a soft, meditative tone. "The Bible says so. I suppose the Bible means just what it says, doesn't it?"

"I suppose it does," he answered slowly, surprised by the question.

"I'm so glad," she returned confidingly. "I like to think it, because it shows us that God is good, and if we are of Him, as it says we are, we must be good too — good in every way. Deformity isn't good!" she added as an afterthought.

He jerked round his head in astonishment, and looked down at the little figure in the dark.

Something like this was what he had been trying to say to her all the evening. He thought he would let the child lead. She seemed to have a clearer idea on the subject than he had, and knew better how to express it. But apparently she had nothing more to say; and after a few minutes he broke the soft, tuneful silence himself, by saying, with wondrous tenderness, "If you have any new light, little one, you must share it with papa."

Penelope's heart gave a quick beat. It was what she had meant to do, and now was the time.

"Did you ever hear of Christian Science, papa?" The tone was anxious.

"Yes," he answered, astonished by the question.

"Have you!" she cried out joyfully. She had not expected this reply. She had asked the question merely as an introduction to what she meant to tell him.

"Why, Penny," he said, lifting her to his knee, that he might have her nearer in the darkness, "I have been trying all the evening to think how to tell you about it. I heard of it for the first time this afternoon. If it can cure one thing, why can't it cure another, little one?"

"It can cure everything," said Penelope, with confidence.

"M-m," he returned. "How do you make that out? You must teach papa, Penny."

Penelope put her hand up caressingly against his neck. It was strange to be told she must teach him, but she felt the seriousness of his tone.

"Well," she began slowly, searching for a clear expression of her thought as she went along, "God is infinite — and if you think what infinite means, why, you'll see there can't be anything but God. And that which expresses Him *must* be good. That is how it is, papa; God is good, so there can't be any evil anywhere, really. You can see that, can't you? because good is infinite. And when we know this — when we know everything *is* good, because God is all in all — the seems-to-be just has to go. It doesn't make any difference what *kind* of a seems-to-be it is."

"Unanswerable logic," muttered Mr. Stuart.

"Does that mean you believe it?" asked Penelope, popping up her head.

"It is very new to me," he answered guardedly. "But it has a true ring. It sounds, Penny, like glad tidings."

"Oh, it is," said the child, with blissful cadences in her voice, sinking back upon his breast. "It rests one so. It has made me all over inside,

papa. I'm full of gladness. I used to cry and cry over what I seemed to be, and now I hardly ever think of it; and when I do, I don't mind. I don't feel deformed. I say over and over that I am God's perfect child, God's perfect child — and I know it."

There was a suffusion of Mr. Stuart's dark eyes, of which he was very conscious, but which Penelope could know nothing of in the darkness. He smoothed her cheek tenderly with his disengaged hand, and before he could speak, she said brightly:

"May I sing for you, papa?"

He would have preferred talking on this new subject, of such vital importance to him, but he did not like to refuse her offer. Never had he heard Penelope offer to sing before. "It is Mrs. Eddy's hymn," she prefaced, beginning in a sweet, childish voice the hymn she loved. She sang it to the end.

"It is a beautiful hymn," he said. He had listened with close attention. "You must sing it for me again presently. Perhaps you can teach it to me, and we'll sing it together. But I did not know," with pleased surprise, "you had so sweet a voice, Penny."

"I can sing better than I used to before I

knew about Christian Science — I suppose because it makes me want to sing."

"But, Penny," the question confronted him suddenly, "how did you hear of Christian Science?"

"Love Hathaway told me."

"Love — Hathaway?" His heart stood still for an instant.

"Not the Love you knew," explained Penelope. "Why, of course not! Another Love from Boston, with blue eyes and shining hair too — like Grace's. She is so tiny! You were startled, weren't you?" she added, conscious of something strained and undefinable about him.

He did not answer for a minute; then he said: "I had forgotten. She is one of Mason's children, I presume. But where did you see her, little one?"

"In the pine grove, papa, last April. I was crying — oh, how I was crying! on a little brown bank, where there were lots of violets, and she spoke to me. You know what I was crying over, don't you?"

"I can guess," he answered, smoothing her cheek tenderly.

"Well, she told me about Christian Science,

and that I was God's perfect child, and Love the only power. I seemed to know it was true the minute she told me. Then she taught me the hymn."

"And you have kept it to yourself all this time," he said musingly.

A self-reproachful feeling came over Penelope. "I have tried to tell it," she explained, "but I couldn't seem to make them understand. I thought it might be hard for any one to believe I can be changed, unless the truth was put very clearly — the way Love put it to me; and I've been afraid that perhaps I couldn't make it plain."

"It is better not to have mentioned it, I should say," he answered.

"Oh, do you think so?" said Penelope, relieved. "I am very glad. It has troubled me sometimes, feeling none of you knew, and thinking it might be wrong in me not to tell." There was a little silence, then she added: "Love is coming again at Thanksgiving. She is going to interest Marcia in Christian Science, when she goes to live in Boston, and get her — or get you all, to have me treated."

"Treated," he repeated mentally. He recalled

the term. "We need not wait for that," he thought, but he did not say this to Penelope. "Her grandfather and grandmother, Mr. and Mrs. Hathaway, have become Christian Scientists," he said.

"They have!" Penelope came upright. "I thought they were so sad, and dispirited, and full of gloom," she said.

He wondered how she knew this, but did not ask. "They are not now," he said. "They are very happy. But their lives were greatly saddened by Love's death — I knew Love very well, Penny."

"Oh, yes! You danced with her one night, when the moon looked through the trees like a great laughing face; and all the dresses were beautifully white and shimmery. I can see just how it looked! Hannah spilled an ice cream all over your foot!"

"Well, well," he said reminiscently. Then, "Was it Hannah who did that? I had forgotten — though I remember the incident very well."

"You hid the broken dishes. And Miss Love told Hannah not to mind, because she was dreadfully frightened, and Hannah went away

to get another ice cream, and forgot all about it. Do you remember Jackson?"

"Jackson?" bringing his thoughts to the consideration of the subject with some difficulty.

"He was the coachman." Then, after an interval of waiting, "Do you think you could find him, papa?"

"Find him?" he repeated, coming suddenly to himself. "Jackson, do you mean? What can you want with Jackson?"

Penelope hardly knew how to answer this question. "It is dreadful to stand in the way of anybody's happiness," she said.

"Am I to understand by this that you are standing in the way of Jackson's happiness?" he asked laughingly.

But Penelope was serious. "I think Hannah would perhaps have married him if it hadn't been for me," she said.

"Whew! So you mean to help Jackson now —is that it?" with a laugh in his pleasant voice.

"I thought perhaps you would try and find him, papa."

"Oh, I'm to be cat's-paw, am I?"

"Cat's-paw!" she laughed. Then went on

thoughtfully, "I mustn't cast a shadow over anybody, you know. It has always made me feel badly to think I did — now I mustn't. Think of a Christian Scientist casting a shadow! I want to get out of everybody's light — and make every little crooked place straight — and have everybody satisfied and happy. It seems to me I couldn't endure to feel I was keeping anything from anybody! It is ever so much more serious keeping Hannah from Jackson Doubleday than it was keeping parties from Stella — don't you think so? I suppose," humorously, "I shall have a great time persuading Hannah that I don't need her. But I don't! I shall be like other people soon — straight and all that — I know I shall! And I mean to act as though I knew it. Oh, I do hope you'll find him, papa!"

Mr. Stuart heartily hoped he might. The affair lost its comical character as she talked; he felt, as he had never felt before, how the sense of burdening other lives had pressed upon the child's heart; and a gratitude too deep for words welled up within him, as he echoed her thought, "that she would be like other people soon."

"But suppose Jackson has married somebody else?" he suggested.

"I don't think he has," with a shake of her head as it lay upon his bosom. "I asked Hannah if she supposed he was married — she doesn't know I know about this! and she said, 'Goodness knew he had better be — he was old enough!' Then she said he was a goose, and she didn't know as anybody was called upon to marry a goose — and I knew what *that* meant!"

"What did it mean?" laughed her father.

"Oh — you know," she answered, snuggling closer to him. "I guess it will be all right, if you can find him — when Hannah knows I don't need her any more. Perhaps Mr. Hathaway will know about him!" This called up the thought of what her father had told her about the Hathaways, and she added, "Have they been Christian Scientists long, papa?"

"No — not long. They spent this last year with Mason and his family, and while with them became convinced of the truth of Christian Science. They had known of it for some years, I think, but had never looked into it — they had so little interest in anything."

"Isn't it strange?" Penelope said musingly. "Christian Scientists so near me and I never suspected! That makes four I know about."

"They haven't been home long — four months or so. I didn't know they had been away." He paused a moment, and then went on: "I haven't liked passing the place, and have avoided doing so whenever it was possible. It used to be a very happy home, and it was saddening to note the change. They did not like seeing those who reminded them of their loss, so I dropped, years ago, out of the habit of going that way. Only necessity made me pass it day before yesterday, when to my astonishment I found the house open, and looking just as it used to look. I have been able to think of little else since, and to-day went over to see them, and found that the darkness which fell upon them when Love went away had been dispelled by Christian Science. There is a light in their faces, Penny, it is beautiful to see."

They were silent for some minutes. Penelope had a hushed feeling as she lay upon his breast, thinking of the Hathaways, and hearing the soft splash and gurgle of the water, and the occasional note of the whippoorwill, and seeing the fitful light of the fireflies in the darkness which lay all about them.

"And so," said Mr. Stuart, finally, with a sudden brightness in his tone, "it was Mason's daughter

who found my little girl! Let us thank God, Penny, for the day on which she found her."

After a little, Penelope said: —

"What did they tell you about Christian Science, papa?"

"I can't seem to remember. The fact is, Penny, I was so astounded over the change in them, I could think of little else. But on the way home my interest in the subject deepened. What is Christian Science, I kept asking myself, that it can work such a transformation? But I didn't think of it in connection with my little girl, till we were at dinner. The sketch seemed a prophecy. If Christian Science can do one thing, why can't it do another? I kept thinking. They told me of the healing of Mason's wife."

"Of consumption. Yes. Love told me. It is the way they came to know about Christian Science — Love's people, I mean. I should think they *would* be interested in Christian Science when it healed Love's mother. The doctors said she could live but a very short time, papa — and that was years ago. Love gave me 'Science and Health.'"

"What's that — the book?"

"Yes," fumbling for her pocket. She brought

out "Science and Health," and they held it between them in the dark. "Grace laughs at my pockets," with a gay little shrug, "but they are a great convenience," said Penelope.

"Suppose I put it in my pocket now — you won't want it to-night?" tentatively. He had been holding the book for some minutes.

"No-o," said Penelope. There were ecstatic cadences in her voice. What a delightful arrangement! "I'll have it in the daytime, and you have it nights," she said.

They spoke but once going back through the orchard. Then Penelope said: —

"There are lights coming and coming, aren't there, papa, all along the way."

Mr. Stuart glanced about at the fireflies. "Yes, Penny," he answered. "There is a text, too, that says the path grows brighter and brighter unto the perfect day."

"And the lights flash out when you don't expect them. I didn't expect a light to-night," nestling closer to his side, "but it came. And I didn't expect a light when Love Hathaway found me, but it came. And I am always finding lights in 'Science and Health.' I suppose it is divine Love that is always about us — and knows just what

we need that makes the shining." She sighed contentedly, then added, "It's a little bit like the fireflies. I've been trying it coming along — looking at a place that seemed all dark, and before I knew it, there would be a glow, and I hadn't known there was anything there that could shine; but 'twas there all the time."

They had reached the piazza before Mr. Stuart spoke again. Then he said, holding her beside him with an arm laid lightly over her shoulders: "I have been considering what to do, Penny. I think we will say nothing to the rest at present. We will wait for more light."

Penelope assented readily. She had no definite views upon the subject, but had she, would have yielded them at once; her father's slightest wish was law to her. "I'm just brimful of happiness," she whispered as they kissed one another affectionately before going into the house.

Mrs. Selfridge was in the parlor, and Rosamond, and Nat and Ruth Bartlett, friends of Marcia's. "Ah, here are the truants," Mrs. Selfridge said, as Penelope and her father entered the room. "You don't know what you have missed," to Mr. Stuart. "Richmond came over for the express purpose of showing off Lady Gray — the *newest*

horse," with a laugh. "As you weren't to be found, he took Agnes and Stella."

"Rather dark for driving, isn't it?" remarked Mr. Stuart, seating himself near Mrs. Selfridge, with a disappointed feeling as he thought of the book in his pocket.

"The darkness of Egypt wouldn't stop Richmond if there is a new horse to try," she laughed. "But it wasn't dark when we started, and really she is a beauty, and he hasn't had much time for driving her. Office hours are *so* long! It seems to me they are a great deal longer than they used to be. But perhaps not. Granville has had her out a number of times. He is a very good horseman for a boy of his age. Richmond says this is positively the last one — five horses. Think of it!"

"The last until the next," said Mr. Stuart, feeling dull.

"Until the next," echoed Mrs. Selfridge, with her quick, catchy little laugh, that had something so joyous and bubbling in it those about her almost invariably caught its humor. "But if he gets another, he'll be obliged to enlarge the stable, or sell one of the present occupants. Every stall is full."

"He told Evelyn the pony, being the ancient

and honorable, would have to vacate," remarked Rosamond. "Evelyn was on the verge of tears."

"She believed him. Well, he'll never sell the pony! The whole house would have him by the ears. You don't know, Mr. Stuart, how prepared we are to defend our rights — and the pony's!"

Mr. Stuart smiled. She was a bright little four-o'clock sort of a woman, upon whom everybody smiled of necessity. She would have lifted blue eyes of astonishment at any niggardliness in respect of this. She had been smiled upon all her life. One wondered, rather, at the contrast between her and her tall fair daughter, until beholding the blond, horse-loving Richmond, whose "vice," as his wife severely styled it on the occasions of certain private lectures, was the admiration of her life. "No, indeed, the pony won't go!" said Mrs. Selfridge, with a laughing shake of her head. "None of them will, for the matter of that! Why, Richmond would utilize the parlor before he would part with a horse!"

They all laughed, for little reason beyond the fact that she laughed herself, and the laugh was contagious.

"Isn't she pretty?" Penelope whispered to Rosamond. She greatly admired Mrs. Selfridge.

"Mamma? Yes, I think she is," smiled Rosamond. She had an arm about Penelope, who, standing beside her, had been answering various questions as to where she had been and how she liked being out in the dark. Nat and Ruth and Marcia and Grace had drifted to the music room.

"Helen has black hair and blue eyes, too," said Penelope, looking from little Mrs. Selfridge to her sister.

"Now, Penny, what does that mean?" Helen asked archly. "It sounds — " and a suggestive tilt of the head finished the sentence.

Penelope's laughing answer was interrupted by Mrs. Selfridge. "Music!" she said, with uplifted forefinger. They listened till the song was finished. Nat and Grace were singing. "Grace has a sweet voice," commented Mrs. Selfridge. "I think Evelyn will have — if she ever gets time to do anything so feminine as singing. She isn't very much else but a boy now. Being a twin spoils her. She feels obliged to do everything Herbert does — and no wonder she gets confused! You haven't any tomboys," to Mrs. Stuart. "But then," with her pleasant laugh, "you haven't any boys, and that makes a difference. I really believe, all one kind or the other

is the more convenient arrangement — then there are no distracting examples for the girls. Do you sing, Penny?"

She flashed a quick glance at her father. "To an audience limited and select," he answered. They were both thinking of the hymn down by the stream, and Penelope felt a thrill of unspeakable happiness that her father shared the secret of her heart. She thought of "Science and Health" in his pocket, and hardly heard, when he added, "I think Penny, like Evelyn, will sing sweetly for us all, later on."

"Penny is fond of music," added Mrs. Stuart, and over her bright face that old shadow stole, Penelope knew so well and that used to grieve her. She did not notice it to-night; did not even think to look for it. But Mrs. Selfridge saw it, and paddled away from the painful theme.

"I was telling Mrs. Stuart," she began, with a little turn toward Mr. Stuart, "about Jack, just before you came in — my sister's son, you know, Jack Prescott. He is a Christian Scientist. We felt dreadfully when he told us — not that we knew anything about it! We know nothing about it now," with her light laugh, "except that it's respectable. That is something, however.

My sister assures me really nice people in Boston have taken up with the cult. I could see she hopes Jack may give it up; but she is by no means so heart-broken over it as I fancied she would be. It is an immense relief to me, however, to know it's respectable; I had never heard of it, and I didn't know what it might be. It seems a thousand pities, though — Jack is such a nice fellow!"

"And never nicer than he is now!" Rosamond put in.

Mr. Stuart had glanced at Penelope out of the tail of his eye, but she was looking at the floor, and did not raise her eyes, until her mother said, with an anxious intonation: —

"I was glad you couldn't tell Grace anything on the subject. She is so enthusiastic, and catches so at a novel idea!"

Penelope carried her glance on to her father. He was conscious of this, though he did not meet her eyes. "Jack is coming at Christmas," said Rosamond to Helen.

"Yes," confirmed Mrs. Selfridge. "He sent a message in Mildred's letter to the effect that he would run down again at Christmas. I feel sure he has designs!" laughing. "I mean to spend

the intervening months strengthening the bulwarks and telling the towers of our faith. We might suggest to Dr. Chadwick to get out special fortifications — Jack is a host in himself. If he doesn't mean this," argumentatively, "I am sure I don't know what he can mean. Once in twelve months was as often as we even hoped for the favor of a visit, and sometimes it was twice that number — more even, this last time."

"But you know, mamma, he was abroad."

"That doesn't make the time any shorter," laughed Mrs. Selfridge.

"Grace will be glad," said Helen. Penelope was thrown into a sudden tremor by her laughing glance. What if Mrs. Selfridge or Rosamond should divine the secret of the sketch!

"Grace?" said Rosamond, with a lift of her fair brows.

"Really?" Mrs. Selfridge questioned. There was a sudden look of calculation on her pretty little face.

Mrs. Stuart bridled. "He told Grace he was a Christian Scientist," she said, adding mentally, "I would like to shake Helen." "I wish Grace didn't enthuse so readily," she went on; "she is possessed to find out what this new thing is."

Mrs. Selfridge's expression changed, but Mrs. Stuart resolved that at Christmas Grace should pay a visit to somebody, somewhere.

Then Mr. Selfridge came in with Agnes and Stella. "Oh, such fun!" cried Agnes. "Wasn't it *great!*" added Stella. "You can't think what it was like, Penny," Agnes said, "tooling along in the dark at such a rate, and not feeling sure what you were going into."

"Didn't you have the carriage lights?" Mrs. Selfridge said, with a startled look.

"They didn't do any good," said Stella, with great enjoyment. "They just let you see the least little bit of a way. 'Twas fine, wasn't it, Agnes, holding your breath and going like the wind?"

"See what you missed, Stuart," Mr. Selfridge said, sitting down beside Rosamond. "You could have gone, Penny," a gentler tone coming into his big voice when he spoke to her, "if you hadn't run off with another man."

"You missed lots," Stella said, with a gratified shake of her small head. "We just *flew!*"

Mr. Selfridge threw back his head with an indulgent laugh. "She gave us an idea of what she can do," he said. "We'll give her a better show sometime, Stella. By the way," coming for-

ward with a hand on either knee, "that old Hathaway place was a blaze of light to-night — changed hands?"

"No," Mr. Stuart said, glancing at Penelope. "You covered considerable ground," he added. "Lady Gray promises well for speed."

Mr. Selfridge looked at his heavy watch. "Not bad — not bad," he muttered, with a modesty quite transparent. "Hasn't changed hands," he resumed. "Well, what has happened? I haven't passed there for a year or more, and when I really made out that it was the old Hathaway house, I concluded the place had been sold. It was some time before I could satisfy myself I wasn't mistaken in the locality; for it has always been, since I have known it, the most desolate, fear-inspiring, no-hope-on-earth sort of a place, on the face of the globe."

His emphatic tones attracted his wife's attention, and she asked, turning her bright face to him: —

"Are you speaking of Weehaukn, dear?"

"Yes. Illuminated."

"Illuminated?"

"Bright as this house; and they don't put their lights under a bushel here."

"Dear me, how strange! I didn't know they ever had a light! I thought," laughing, "'they went to bed by day'—like the children. Well, I'm glad. Poor souls!"

Mr. Stuart winced. His wife was regarding him with an odd little smile hovering near her lips, but not breaking over them. Mrs. Selfridge babbled on. "I am sure it's a cause for rejoicing if any light has broken in upon the gloom of that home. I have never seen them, but I have been told they are, or were, fine looking, and very agreeable. They had gone into that dreadful retirement, you know, before we came here. Such a pity! I never can understand why people find life so hard—living seems an easy thing to me; one has only to look at the sky and the flowers to know we ought to be happy." Mr. Stuart watched her curiously. "You knew them well, I suppose?" with a quick turn toward Mrs. Stuart.

"I have never seen either Mr. or Mrs. Hathaway. They had been abroad years when I was married—six or seven, wasn't it, Jerome?" He nodded, and his wife added, with a contented little laugh, "Jerome used to be intimate there—so I have heard."

Mrs. Selfridge turned upon him with a fragrance of manner like that of a nodding flower. "How interesting!" she said. "The change must make you very happy!" Her eyes were sweet as violets.

"It does," he answered simply.

"I'm happy myself over it," said Mrs. Selfridge.

Penelope went over and sat upon her father's knee.

"You are a papa girl, I see," remarked Mr. Selfridge. "Aren't you sorry for me, Penny? My little girl," touching Rosamond's hand, "has grown so big I'm afraid even to mention sitting on my knee."

Penelope laughed, but Mr. Selfridge looked serious, and she thought perhaps he was sorry. "There is Evelyn," she suggested.

"Yes — there's Evelyn," agreed Mr. Selfridge, studying the carpet. "But, Penny," flashing his light, laughing eyes to her face, "I should as soon think of asking to hold Nick!"

They all laughed. The picture of Mr. Selfridge, with his grumpy nephew on his knee, was irresistibly funny.

"Nicholas troubles me," said Mrs. Selfridge, drooping.

"Notwithstanding the sky and the flowers!"

Mrs. Selfridge revived. "You're too ridiculous, Richmond! It is only a little flickering shadow; I don't creep under it and stay all the time — I let it go."

"That's praiseworthy. But suppose it wouldn't let *you* go?"

"Scare it," said Stella, as Mrs. Selfridge had nothing to say to this.

"That's a good suggestion," said Mr. Selfridge, solemnly. "I'll make a note on't — like what's-his-name! But suppose you haven't the substance?" quizzically.

"I don't know what you mean," Stella said, round-eyed and serious. "I thought perhaps it was necessary to get hold of something substantial in order to make the shadow go," he explained. Stella did not understand and felt uncomfortable, which amused him, and he was still looking at her with a laugh in his eyes, though his face was as grave as a judge's, when his ears caught the words "Christian Science."

"Eh?" said he, turning quickly; "what's that about Christian Science?"

"Mr. Stuart was just telling me the Hathaways have become Christian Scientists," said his wife,

with a look in her face that suggested a laugh, though she was not laughing.

Mr. Selfridge made his mouth very round, as though he had it in mind to whistle, but thought better of it. "Well, well," he said; "so the wind is in that quarter, is it?"

"It's quite appalling," Mrs. Selfridge said, with her easy laugh, "to feel it's creeping upon us from another source! I'm positively afraid it will hem us in." There was a levity in this, or in the manner in which it was uttered, not in keeping with the circumstances, of which she was speedily aware, and added sweetly: "But I'm very glad, I'm sure, that there *is* something that can lighten the burden of the sorrowful. It surprised me a little at first. We had just been speaking of Mildred's letter," looking at her husband, "and of Jack's having taken up with the new idea."

"It is a pity there are so many new ideas," remarked Mrs. Stuart, with evident disfavor.

Mr. Selfridge followed Stella with his eyes as she tripped out of the room. Nat Bartlett was singing. Agnes had already gone. "Nat's voice isn't what we expected it to be," he commented critically. "He hasn't panned out according to plans. These failures to come up to

the standard of one's elders must be disheartening! I was saved the experience, but I feel for the fellows who aren't." Rosamond left off playfully pinching his ear, as he added with sudden thoughtfulness, "So you were speaking of Jack," to remark regretfully:—

"He is serious enough in it, isn't he, papa?"

Mrs. Selfridge flashed a quick glance at them.

"Did he talk to you about it, Rosamond," she said.

"He talked to me," said Mr. Selfridge. "Had me in the library two nights till after midnight."

"Talking Christian Science?"

"Talking Christian Science."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

Mr. Selfridge considered. "I believe, my dear, I was afraid you would set Dr. Chadwick on me," he answered with a laugh.

"He didn't make an impression on you—that's easy to see," she remarked.

"He impressed me with his earnestness," returned her husband. "And if half he told me concerning it is true, I do not wonder at his earnestness."

"We must make allowances;" and, with a glance at Mr. Stuart, "I don't know why we

should oppose it. If it heals the sick, as Jack says it does, and comforts the sorrowing — it is a good thing for them. I'm sure we wouldn't deprive others of that which is beneficial to them, or that makes them happy — though we may not want it ourselves."

"Jack seems to think we all need Christian Science."

"Oh, well — we don't," with her quick laugh.

Mrs. Stuart's face was set in lines of determination. "It is a fad," she said, with a glance at Penelope. She did not like the absorbed expression on the little face. "It will die out shortly, as all such things do. And the less there is said about it or thought about it, the sooner it will be forgotten. I prefer you shouldn't mention the subject, Helen," she added, with a steady look at her. To say this in Penelope's presence was sufficient to insure her silence, she knew. "I shall love Nat all my life," she inwardly commented, "for his singing mood to-night, and for having sufficiently agreeable qualities to keep Grace and the rest out of the way." "It is an entirely new thought," she said aloud. "You will find that it won't last." But she rejoiced in the thought of their speedy

departure for Sweetbrier; it would be a relief to feel the girls were out of harm's way — Grace particularly.

As they were driving home, Mr. Selfridge said, with a slight turn of his face in his wife's direction, "Do you think Christian Science could do anything for Penny?"

"No, indeed."

"What do you think Jack would say?"

"Now, Richmond," expostulated his wife, leaning forward in her earnestness, and putting both hands upon the back of the seat in front of her, "don't interfere. Please don't speak of the subject to any one. You saw how Mrs. Stuart feels about it."

"And how she regards it is of more importance than the child's healing, is it?"

"Don't be ridiculous — of course not. But Christian Science couldn't help Penny Stuart!"

"Jack wouldn't say so," said Rosamond.

"Now, Rosamond," reproachfully, turning to the girl at her side, "I thought we were at one on the subject."

"We are. But you said yourself it might be a good thing for some — for those who are sick and sorrowing; it seems to me Penny needs it,

if any one does. I was impressed with Mr. Stuart's earnestness as he spoke of the Hathaways. Consumption! It's a wonderful thing to be healed of consumption. I thought he was thinking of Penny."

"I thought so too, Rosamond," her father said, with a backward glance. "I would like to see that little girl made well and straight."

"But don't take the initiative, Richmond," pleaded the little woman earnestly. "Don't suggest it to them. You know, Rosamond, how unwilling Mrs. Stuart is to have Grace enlightened."

"Jack will enlighten her at Christmas."

"I doubt if he will," laughing. "I think I saw in Mrs. Stuart's face that Grace will not be here."

"And I think *I* saw," with a backward glance at Rosamond, "that Penny's eyes are wide open. Did you notice when she said to me that she should sit on her father's knee when she is as *tall as you are?*"

"Yes, I noticed. Queer, wasn't it?"

"Queer in a mite that it isn't supposed will grow any more."

"I noticed her mother's pained expression. It must be *so* hard to have her make such remarks.

I felt sorry for her, poor woman! It is a heavy cross for any mother; and she bears it with such beautiful fortitude!"

"If one thing can be cured, another can," said Mr. Selfridge, sententiously.

"You mustn't forget, Richmond, that there are *things* and *things*."

"Jack claims the cures are the demonstrations of God's power, as I understand it. He argues that sickness and suffering of every sort and sin are unreal, because they cannot possibly come from God. I didn't feel like opposing the proposition, Amy. It is a little distasteful to deny the goodness of God; and you virtually do it when maintaining that He created, or creates, or has knowledge of evil. I hadn't much to say. I found the creed was a set of pretty shaky statements I couldn't push to any logical conclusion, and Jack had the best of me every time. So I dropped out and listened, after the first few attempts to vindicate the faith of my fathers. It is conclusive, you see, that if God is *infinite*, He can have no opposite. You're obliged to deny the *first* proposition or you *can't* support the second."

"You had better go to Dr. Chadwick and let him bolster your faith," said his wife, with a

laugh. "*He'll* show you whether or no the creed is a set of shaky statements. I think, Rosamond, we had better get your father off on a visit to somebody, somewhere, at Christmas time."

Rosamond laughed in her mother's light, happy way. Then she said:—

"But, papa, you must see that even if Christian Science can cure some things, deformity isn't one of them."

Mr. Selfridge thought a moment.

"No, Rosamond," he said, "I must say I don't see anything of the kind. Not if the theory of God's allness be true. It's a little presumptive, don't you think, to set a limit to God's power? I thought you were arguing a few minutes ago that it might help Penny," he added.

"In some ways I think it might help her," she answered. "But not her deformity! Oh, surely not that!"

"I can't see if it can do one thing why it can't another," he returned obstinately.

Mrs. Selfridge sighed softly. In her heart she was very glad the Stuarts were going away the day after the morrow. "I would be as glad as any one to see the dear child made what she ought

to be," she thought. "But I don't want Richmond to — to put himself in an unpleasant light by suggesting Christian Science. Besides, it can't do anything for poor little Penny. Rosamond is right — there is no help for Penny."

Mr. Stuart was waiting for Penelope at the head of the piazza steps next morning, when she came from the garden with a handful of dewy roses for the breakfast table.

"I read all night, Penny," he whispered as he bent to kiss her. She gave a little joyful exclamation; then her tone changed. "Aren't you sleepy?" searching his face. "But you don't look sleepy a bit."

"Never felt better in my life! Fresh as a lark! But the fact is, Penny, I didn't know I was sitting up so late, and when a bird gave its first joyful peep for coming day, I was considerably surprised. I closed the book then, and crept up to my room — with a guilty feeling every time the stairs creaked," laughing, "and had a most refreshing sleep. I am the first one down now, except our 'Early Bird,'" pinching her little cheek. "That is a wonderful book, Penny!"

"Yes," Penelope said happily. "I never get tired of it. I can read and read and read." She

put the wet roses up to his nose, and he buried his face in them, and then, laughing, took out his handkerchief, and Penelope fastened a bud in his buttonhole. As he bent for her to do this, he scrutinized the happy little face. He was conscious, like Marcia, of the wonderful change in her, but he knew now to what to attribute it, while she did not.

"What shall I say to the Hathaways for you?" he asked. "I am going there before coming home to-day, and I must have a 'Science and Health' of my own."

"Do you think I shall ever see them?" wistfully.

"Yes, indeed. Mrs. Hathaway was my mother's dearest friend. We were back and forth continually when I was a boy, and young man. I hope the intimacy will be resumed when we come back in the fall — I'm sure it will."

"Tell them," said Penelope, "that I know all is harmony, and God is Love."

Mr. Stuart smoothed her hair slowly and looked thoughtfully across the lawn, where the dewdrops, nestling amid the grass, blazed forth like jewels as the sun found them out. There was a stir in the line of maples, beginning far away and

swelling as it came on, like the tide of the sea. It reminded Penelope of it.

"I shall love to see the ocean to-morrow," she remarked.

"Yes," her father assented absently. "I am to tell them all *is* harmony, am I?" he said presently.

"Yes," unhesitatingly. "However it may look, we must hold on to the truth, and the seems-to-be will have to go."

"I think it will," he said slowly, after a little silence.

"Oh, I know it! You will know it after a little. Love is the only power, papa." They were going in to breakfast now, and she looked up at him, as she held by his hand, "Lights keep coming, don't they, thicker and faster, like the fireflies last night?"

## CHAPTER IX

### MRS. STUART'S EYES ARE OPENED

It was on a bright morning, in the latter part of July, that Mrs. Stuart's eyes were opened to the change in her daughter Penelope. She was sitting with Marcia on the piazza at Sweetbrier; and having lifted her eyes from her book, to follow Penelope as she ran down the piazza steps at Helen's side, said to Marcia, in a querulous tone, which seldom found its way into her voice: —

"I cannot understand what the trouble is with Penny's dresses this summer! They have all shrunken so."

Marcia looked up and then down again, and opened her lips, as though she had it in mind to add some comment, but closed them again without speaking. Mrs. Stuart watched the girls in a sidelong fashion, without lifting her head, as they went down the long plank walk leading to the beach. "The child isn't fit to be seen," said she, presently, in the same complaining tone. "I have

had Hannah lengthen the dresses until there is nothing left to let down — I'm sure I don't know what to do. And here it isn't August! If we were at home, it would be another matter, but down here I feel so helpless."

Marcia folded her beautiful hands over the sewing on her lap, and looked at Penelope. "Even your father noticed it," Mrs. Stuart continued, looking down at her book again. "He said this morning that Penelope's dresses were getting short, with the oddest look in his face. I'm sure I don't know how I can help it — *I* didn't make the materials! Do you notice he has begun calling her Penelope?" with a sudden glance.

"Yes. Somehow it seems to suit her. I have found myself calling her so several times of late."

"Don't cultivate the habit. If your father wishes to call her so, I suppose he must be allowed to do it in peace; but it is such a cold-sounding name for the poor little thing."

She bent her head over her book again, and was soon absorbed in its contents, every shade of irritation gone from her pleasant face. Marcia looked from her to Penelope and back irresolutely. Then her eye was caught by the gleaming whiteness of a patch in an old blackened sail out at sea.

"Perils past," said she to herself. "I wonder what storm it was. There are so many 'alones,' as Grace says — things going on about us of which we never dream! And Penny — she seems so gallant — seaworthy, I get something from her more like a fresh sea breeze than anything else I know — unless it is the breath of violets. Strange mamma doesn't see!" She looked at her mother again, and after some minutes' fruitless effort to speak, said in a hesitating way: —

"Do you think they *are* shrinking, mamma?"

Mrs. Stuart lifted her head mechanically, her thoughts lingering with her book. "Do I think — what?" said she.

"That they are shrinking — Penny's dresses, I mean."

Mrs. Stuart took time to let the question make itself clear to her, then she said: "Why, Marcia, I don't *think* anything about it. I know they are!"

"They are the materials you generally use, are they not?"

"That," returned Mrs. Stuart, all her perplexity rolling back upon her, "is the strangest part of it. Precisely the same." She closed her book, with a finger between the leaves to keep the place, as she moved her chair a little,

the better to see Helen and Penelope, sauntering along the hard, smooth sand, and, craning a little sidewise as she watched them, concluded in the same complaining tone: "And they have never given me the least trouble before. Not the least." Presently she added, with a quick note of delight in her voice: "What a child she is for the water! Look at her now! She is always happy here. How pretty they look out on that point, against the water! It is beautiful on the beach this morning: that curl of surf is soft and white as milk. Grace ought to be here, she would get a charming picture. See that gull's wing against the sky! It is almost dazzling. There is nothing else so white — no bird I mean. It seems to me Helen looks shorter than usual! Walking with Penny has usually the effect of making you all appear so very tall. But I dare say being down there accounts for it — one unconsciously compares her instead with those wide stretches of sand and sea. Look at Penny! daring the water to touch her toe! Ha, ha!" she laughed out gayly. "Not quick enough *that* time, my dear. Hear her laugh!"

Marcia smiled in an absent-minded fashion. After a little she ventured: —

"Do you think, mamma, that Penny is taller?"

"Penny! taller?" exclaimed Mrs. Stuart, with a start, all the brightness instantly gone from her manner. "Do I think Penny is taller? What do you mean? How can you, Marcia! You *know* she is not."

"I have thought so, mamma."

"That she is *taller?*"

"Yes, mamma."

Mrs. Stuart stared for the space of a minute, with an incredulous expression on her face. Then she burst into tears. "Marcia, how *can* you!" she cried, putting her handkerchief to her eyes. "You have no idea how you hurt me — how it brings all the old misery back."

"But if it were true —"

"It isn't true," interrupted her mother, in a high, whimpering voice. "I can't think what has put such an idea into your head."

She took her handkerchief down from her face presently, and put it away with a sigh. "Don't say this again. You have no idea how it startled me," she said. "I am resigned now, but you will never know — how can you? You were such a little thing yourself in those bitter years — how I suffered before I could resign myself

to God's will — before I could say, 'Let His will be done.'"

There was a little silence between them; then, a sudden terror springing into her handsome eyes, she added, sharply: —

"Don't speak of this again, Marcia! It frightens me! Why, I might come to hope again — for that which can never be."

"How do you know it can never be, mamma?" persisted Marcia, but pityingly.

"How do I know? What a question! Didn't Dr. McLean tell me so? Certainly he is authority — you can't deny that. He told me long, long ago, that she would grow no more. Oh!" with a shudder, "I mustn't think of it — I am all a-tremble now, and, Marcia, don't, I beg of you, speak of it again."

Nothing more was said for some time. The rote of the ocean, in subdued rhythm, alone broke the great silence. Mrs. Stuart, having partially regained herself, was first to speak.

"Poor little Penny," said she, softly. "But I think she is happy — don't you? I believe you were mistaken in what you said last spring about her misfortune weighing upon her. I have been meaning to tell you so for some time. She seems

very light-hearted, and certainly she could have no greater kindness than has been shown her all her life."

Marcia shook her head. "No, mamma," she said.

"It is a great comfort to me that it is so," rejoined Mrs. Stuart, moving her chair nearer Marcia's, that she might have an uninterrupted view of the beach, the vine interposing a leafy screen in the place where she had been sitting. Then she laid the book, which had lost its interest, on the table beside Marcia's work-basket, and leaning forward a little, with one arm on the arm of the chair, looked thoughtfully at Helen and Penelope. Gradually Marcia saw the pensive expression of her face give place to a look of calculation, and she finally said with her accustomed briskness: —

"When Miss Shepard opens her rooms to finish your work, Marcia, I shall take Penny up and have some dresses made for her. I have decided. I really can't let her go on in this way. That will be a week from to-day, won't it? I shall take her the first day, and get it off my hands. Now!" she exclaimed, with a look of having solved a mystery, and of being greatly relieved by it, "I shouldn't be one bit surprised if Miss Shepard made a mistake

in Penny's skirt measurements, and that is the trouble after all. I couldn't understand those materials shrinking," adopting the explanation instantly, "for I have never had any such experience with them before, and such mistakes do happen now and then, and I am convinced that is the trouble. I am glad I thought of it; it is a relief to know what to lay it to."

"Were they too short at first, mamma — did you notice?"

"Why, they must have been. Now, don't look a contradiction, and *don't* — look that other thing," said Mrs. Stuart, sinking limply into her chair. "You wouldn't, Marcia, if you knew how it makes me feel. Why, I should be frightened, if I thought it were true! It would be contrary to law and — and —" searching for a word, "gospel."

"Are you sure, mamma?"

"Of course I am sure. A thing is contrary to law and gospel which can't be — isn't it?"

"I never feel like saying a thing can't be."

"One might as well say it, when one knows it is true."

"Yes — if one knows it is true."

"I fail to see the point in your objection, for in this instance we know it is true. You would know

it yourself," with sudden bitterness, "had you been in my place, and suffered as I have, in the struggle to resign myself to the inevitable."

Marcia understood how true it was that her mother had suffered. She seemed to feel sympathetically the burden of all those years, as she looked at her, and an indescribable pity came into her sweet face. Then growing bold in her desire to banish the cloud which caused so much sorrow, she said: —

"But it is true, mamma, that Penny is taller. She has been growing all summer. I have been conscious of it for a month, at least."

Mrs. Stuart came upright in her chair with a start; her face crimsoned, and a strained expression succeeded to the flush. Marcia was startled, but she insisted: —

"She is taller, mamma. She has been growing — is growing. I have seen it for weeks."

Mrs. Stuart's lips moved as though she were speaking, but no sound came. Then she burst out in a crying voice, shrill with the effort it cost her to speak at all: "You are wrong — wrong! Why do you say such things? Do you think I would not have been first to notice it, if it were true? I — her mother? I — who have wept and

watched and prayed and waited — and despaired! It isn't true — it can't be true! You are deceived, Marcia, you are deceived!"

Marcia made no reply to this, but kneeling beside her mother's chair took her mother in her strong, young arms, as she said simply: —

"It isn't a thing to cry over, mamma dear. It is something to make us look up at the blue sky, and say our prayers, and sing."

Sobs caught Mrs. Stuart's breath, as she asked hysterically: "How did she know — what made her first see it — was she sure of what she said?" And then again: "Why she, her mother, had not been first to note the change?" All these questions, and many others, poured themselves out, not waiting to get themselves answered, until that last, reiterated question which wound up the confused list, "Why she, her mother, had not been first to see the change?"

"I don't know, mamma," Marcia answered, in a calm voice, so good to hear, "unless — I'm not sure of this! but don't you think possibly — just possibly! being so certain it *couldn't* be, you were not looking for it — or were looking so steadily at the reverse, perhaps, you could not see — *this*. Something like that, you know."

"Dear me, Marcia," exclaimed her mother, in an irritated tone, "you are as bad as your father — and I can never understand him! He puts things up so high, one standing on the earth can't see whether they are right or not." Then suddenly dropping her note of complaint, she added plaintively, "I don't believe it is true."

"It is true," Marcia said firmly.

Mrs. Stuart began to cry. It was a matter of vital moment to her. She would have sacrificed — was there any sacrifice she would not have made joyfully, to give to Penelope a perfect body? But in the very greatness of her desire, in view of those long years of waiting, doubt, despair, she turned trembling, with a loud and bitter heart cry, from the first stirring of that long-buried hope. "I don't believe it," she moaned. "I don't — I don't. I can't! It isn't true."

"It is true."

"How do you know?" she demanded shrilly. "Don't deceive me, Marcia!"

"Grace knows it, mamma, I am sure," Marcia answered, possessing herself of her mother's handkerchief, and making little dabs at her mother's eyes and cheeks. Then drawing her mother's head to rest upon her shoulder, with one of her

own beautiful hands pressed upon the cheek, she added, "And so does Helen — though she never speaks of it — and I am sure Penny does!"

Mrs. Stuart jerked up her head. "How do you know Penny knows?" she gasped.

"Oh, by little signs — like this, for instance. Just before we came down here, she returned a hassock which belongs in my room, but has stood near her mantel for a great, great while — because she could not see upon it without standing on something, and that happened to be just the right height — and said as she left it, with a peculiar emphasis, and the most searching look in her eyes, that she no longer needed it. I feel sure now — though I did not quite understand at the time — that she was trying in this way either to draw my attention to the change, or else to satisfy herself if I observed it. I do not know which. There have been many such little incidents since we came here. But I have felt instinctively she would rather I did not speak to her upon the subject — and we have not talked it over among ourselves."

"Well, it is strange," returned Mrs. Stuart, fretfully, "that she did not try to tell me, or try to find out if I observed the change — I, her own mother!"

"Perhaps she did, mamma."

Mrs. Stuart shook her head. "What a queer girl you are, Marcia! Wouldn't I have known it if she had?"

Marcia said: —

"Well — Penny is so timid, it is possible she couldn't get up courage to do it, mamma. I think she felt I knew — that I had an inkling long ago, and that would make a difference. Penny is very sensitive and retiring, you know."

Mrs. Stuart, paying no heed to Marcia's explanation, looked musingly at the quivering pattern of the vine leaves on the piazza floor. "My — my," she kept muttering feebly. "I should be only too thankful," she said, glancing up, with a helpless look on her face, "to feel it is true. Only too thankful. But, O dear," in a sudden burst, "I don't believe it — I can't believe!"

"It is true, mamma," Marcia said again. "You will see it for yourself, I am sure, when they come in sight again."

"What will your father say?" cried Mrs. Stuart, electrified by this sudden thought. "I am so dazed I can't think! but what do you suppose he will say? O dear, I'm all in a tumult! Shall I laugh, or cry, or sing — or what shall I do?" she ended, in a sharply ascending voice.

"Just be glad," said Marcia, comfortingly.

It was the quiet, happy, grateful, good tone, no doubt, which produced the effect, for Mrs. Stuart's hysterical symptoms began to abate, and shortly after she went to the head of the piazza steps, just as Helen and Penelope sauntered around a rocky point, and stood there watching them.

"That is why Helen does not appear so tall as usual," said she, in a tone of conviction.

"Yes, mamma."

"There is no reason why Penny shouldn't grow like other girls of her age, is there?" she observed presently, fortifying her shaken sensibilities in this manner.

"None whatever."

"I declare," indignantly, after an interval of watching, "I have no patience with these doctors! I should think Dr. McLean would be ashamed of himself!"

"He said what he thought, mamma."

"He needn't have been in such a hurry about saying it! Why didn't he wait?"

"I suppose, mamma, you urged him to say what he thought," smiled Marcia.

"I suppose I did. I know I did. But he might have used his judgment, for all that. I say again,

I have no patience with him, and I should think he would be ashamed of himself!" She was silent for a moment, watching the girls intently, and then went on indulgently: "But I'll forgive him. I would forgive all the world if it were in debt to me — I am so happy. I can't realize it is true — but I know it — I can see that it is," certain bright, vibrant qualities which belonged to her voice beginning to assert themselves. "What will your father say?" she exclaimed. "What will our friends say? How shall we tell them? I declare, Marcia, I don't know what to do! I am all in a whirl."

Marcia's face was bright with satisfaction. She was saying to herself how glad she was she had persevered in her effort to open her mother's eyes to the change in Penelope, a fact so patent the wonder was she had not seen it for herself, when her mother turned sharply and, with sudden dismay in her voice, said: —

"You don't think she'll stop, do you?"

"Stop?"

"Growing!" impatiently. "You are so dull of comprehension sometimes, Marcia. Do you think she is likely to stop growing?"

"It is to be hoped she will."

"Don't laugh! It's no laughing matter. You know what I mean. It may be a little start. Suppose she stops where she is?"

"I wouldn't bother my head supposing, mamma. Why should she begin to grow, like other girls, and then drop the good practice without rhyme or reason?"

"I don't know why she should. I don't know why she has begun growing. My! it beats all I have ever heard! None of Jack Prescott's stories can go ahead of this. I can hardly believe the evidence of my own eyes! What do you fancy started her — not diet, do you think? or the sea air?"

Marcia laughed. She recalled those talks with Penelope in the spring; and what she had said of God, and of being His perfect child, but she did not mention this. The thought of Christian Science came to her also; but how could Christian Science have reached Penelope? "I'm sure it's a permanent change," she said brightly. "I don't in the least fear now but that Penelope will develop into a tall, straight, beautiful girl."

"Think of it! Neither do I, really. It's silly to suppose she is governed wholly by freaks. But it's so overwhelming — and one does like to account for things."

She sat down near Marcia, rocking nervously, and talked and talked — the overflowing of a heart too exultant for silence. "It seems to me I must call to her, and do — I don't know what, when I get my hands on her!" Then catching a doubtful shade on Marcia's face, she added: "It is better not to make a commotion, I suppose. You think so, I know."

"We do not make a commotion over Grace's growing."

"Of course not. And it is just the same with Penny — *just the same with Penny!*"

She laughed from sheer gladness. She was still laughing when Stella came tripping around the corner of the piazza. "My! aren't you two having a merry time!" she said, making herself comfortable in a corner of the piazza balustrade amid the vine leaves, and peering forth through the little openings here and there among the leaves.

"Seems to me," she commented presently in a critical tone, "that Penny wears her dresses awfully short. She looks like a crane hopping about."

"Don't make such remarks, Stella," her mother said severely.

"Well — they are short, aren't they?" she insisted.

"Penny is to have some new dresses, right off!"

"Is she? Am I?"

"You are not growing fast enough to make it necessary," Mrs. Stuart returned complacently; and went on smiling to herself, tapping the arm of her chair with the forefinger of the hand resting upon it, making a sound not unlike that of a hungry woodpecker looking for his dinner, and seeing a wonderful assortment of gowns for Penny — bright gowns, light gowns, fluffy gowns — an accumulation, so to speak, of the brightness and lightness and fluffiness which should have been spread over the monotonous fourteen years of her sober-toned young life.

No more brown and tans for Penelope because they were "less conspicuous," than most other colors. No more of that one unvarying fashion which could "best hide the deformity." Mrs. Stuart had assured herself that there would be no further need in this respect.

"Is — is she changing — in other ways, do you think?" she had asked, and waited in breathless anxiety for the reply.

"Yes — oh, yes," Marcia had replied promptly.

"Her — poor dear little back, I mean," explained her mother, wincing a little, as she always did when referring to Penelope's deformity.

"I know," Marcia had said softly. "I understood. Yes, greatly, I think. I had not observed it until about a week ago. But if you look closely, you will see the change is very marked."

So Mrs. Stuart, with this comforting assurance in her heart, sat, after answering Stella, dreaming over Penelope's future, smiling to herself, and making that sharp little tapping, like the sound of a woodpecker, at intervals on the arm of her chair.

Suddenly Stella exclaimed, as though the thought had but that moment forced itself upon her: —

"Why, is Penny growing?"

Mrs. Stuart was alert instantly.

"Why shouldn't she?" she said, fixing Stella with her eyes.

"I didn't know that kind of child could grow!"

"Stella," sternly, "never speak of your sister in that way again!"

"I didn't mean to say anything against Penny, mamma," said Stella, abashed. "Only I thought that kind — I thought *some* kinds of children

could grow just so much, and that then they stopped, and when they stopped they couldn't begin again."

Not so very unlike what Dr. McLean had said, and Mrs. Stuart winced again. But she answered, still a little sharply, "Well, never mind what you thought." And then added convincingly, though her own recognition of the fact had been somewhat tardy, "There is no law about these things."

Stella, making a broader opening among the vine leaves, that she might have an unobstructed view, looked down upon Penelope and Helen.

"I believe she is," she observed, in her clear, high-pitched, childish voice, "I really believe she is. I wonder, does she know. I'm glad it is *that* — and not that I am dwindling. I have had an awful scare! I didn't say anything about it — I didn't want you to know — but I used to be taller than Penny, and now I'm not as tall — I thought I was *growing short.* It's a great relief to find it's only Penny growing tall. She does look funny though," with a rueful glance at her mother. "You must see that she does. If Dick Damon should see her, he would want her for a stork! He is always looking for animals for his mena-

gerie. Once he asked me to be a goldfinch! I told him," scornfully, "I didn't play menagerie. I wasn't a boy."

"A goldfinch is hardly an animal, is it?"

"It's all the same to Dick. He isn't particular about distinctions — something new to show is all he cares about. He is always asking me to be something — as though I would! He wanted me for an owl once! I didn't like it very well, and I told him not to ask me to be anything again. No sign I'm an owl because my eyes are round! Julia told me not to mind — he made her be a monkey!"

"Made her?"

"Well, asked her to, and she did. She told him she thought she would do very well, being his sister. Maurice just roared — but I couldn't see anything funny in it." She turned abruptly and faced her mother, "Why didn't you tell me Penny was growing?" said she.

"Well," Mrs. Stuart began, and stopped. She fidgeted a little, but finding no answer to Stella's question, she cared to give, looked up, and said instead: —

"You are not to talk about it, Stella, now that you do know."

"May I tell Agnes? Does Agnes know?"

"Yes, you may tell Agnes."

Stella sprang from her perch, and running to the door thrust her head forward a little into the hall, calling, "Ag-nes! Ag-nes!"

Presently Agnes appeared, yawning, with a book in her hand, and Stella, seizing her unceremoniously, dragged her to the head of the piazza steps. "Tell what you see," said she, peremptorily.

Agnes sniffed. "What a delicious morning!" she exclaimed. "I can't think why I cooped myself up in the library. Tell what I see? I see the sea," laughing.

"More than that!"

"More than that?" teasingly. "Well — I see the sea is blue. And on the sea I see is blue, I see —"

Stella gave her a sudden shake. "On the beach," said she, "walking."

"On — the beach — walking. Oh! On the beach — walking, I see that beautiful Helen Stuart and her sister Penelope."

"What do you see about Penny?"

"What do I see about Penny? Earth, sea, or sky, do you mean?"

"Is there anything *new?*"

"No," said Agnes, "nothing new."

"Well, there is! She's taller! She's growing! Penny is growing!"

"Oh," said Agnes, quietly. "Do you call that new? I thought it was almost old."

Mrs. Stuart, who had been attentive to the dialogue, and very watchful of Agnes, shot a swift glance at Marcia, and hurriedly picked up her book.

"Well, I didn't know," Stella said, in an injured tone. "I think I might know what goes on in the family — I'm not exactly a baby."

"You know now," said her mother, glancing up from the book she had opened at random, "and I hope you will profit by Agnes's example. She has conducted herself admirably!"

Agnes said: —

"I thought it might hurt Penny, mamma, if we talked about it — as though it were remarkable that she should grow — something not to be expected, you know. I thought you all thought so," with a little wonder, "and that was the reason no one referred to it."

"It would hurt her," Mrs. Stuart rejoined. "There is no doubt about it. Penny is very sensitive. Now, Stella, I wish you to be very careful,

and keep in mind what I say. Treat it as a thing to be expected — or take no notice of it, anyway; that is the safer course. You and Agnes are both taller than you were last spring — why shouldn't Penny be?" She looked around convincingly, feeling suddenly at home with the idea.

"But she's never grown a bit since I can remember," said the irrepressible Stella. "It's funny she should now! She's always been just so high."

"Don't refer to that again. And, Stella," as the girls started down the steps, "don't stare at Penny when you get down upon the beach! Remember!" She brought her eyes from watching them as they ran down the plank walk to bear upon Marcia, as she said, with a humorous pucker about her lips: —

"So Agnes had observed it, too, it seems. They say we live in our children, and viewed in that light I've nothing to complain of. But it must be gratifying to feel one has some penetration. However, I'll open your father's eyes — *that* will be a satisfaction."

"But I think he knows, mamma."

Mrs. Stuart looked at her incredulously for a moment, and then laughed. "Poor Stella — I can

sympathize with her," said Stella's mother, putting her handkerchief before her face, and laughing again in her comfortable fashion. "I'm afraid it is true that Stella is her mother's own child! But how do you know?" coming suddenly from behind her handkerchief. "Did he tell you? I should think he would have told me instead."

"No. He didn't tell me — but he made me understand."

"Why didn't he make me understand?"

"You weren't there, mamma," smiled Marcia. "It was this morning. When I came down Penny was standing at the French window in the library, looking out over the water, and papa, standing in the library door, was watching her. I saw the intent expression on his face, and so did not speak; but when he heard me coming, he glanced around, and made a quick motion toward Penny, and then looked directly back at her, and the same intent, satisfied expression came into his face. I think she had just come in from a walk, for she had some flowers in her hand — those you found at your plate — and that little crimson silk scarf of mine over her shoulders. Her cheeks were flushed, and the breeze which came in at the open window fluttered her hair and skirts, and

she looked so fresh and buoyant, standing there — gazing out over the sea!"

"I know the look," said Mrs. Stuart, musingly. "I have observed it in her of late, though I had not thought about it. Go on."

"There was something indescribable in her pose, and in the expression of her face! something eager — confident — triumphant — I don't know what word to use! which I shall never forget. It is one of the prettiest, if not the prettiest picture of Penny I have in my mind. Do you know, mamma, I think she will be a very handsome woman."

"Penny! Do you?" in a surprised tone, looking toward the group on the beach. "I have never supposed so; she has given no promise of it. But," with her quick laugh, "it wouldn't astonish me greatly now." She went on smilingly watching the girls for a minute, and then said abruptly, "Well, you haven't finished your story."

"There isn't much more to tell, mamma. Papa looked back at me with that happy, inscrutable light in his eyes, and half whistled, half crooned, — but very soft and low — Penny did not hear! a snatch of that old song: —

"'Springtime has come, gentle Annie,'

and so I knew."

"'And so you knew!' Well, I am glad you knew. He may have half whistled, half crooned,

"'Springtime has come, gentle Annie,'

to let *me* know, but I failed to get the impression. However, I have it now," said Mrs. Stuart, her bright, wholesome face beaming with her sense of the humor of it. "I believe all our eyes are open at last — even Stella's and mine."

"It has all come about very naturally," said Marcia.

"Do you think so? I thought it required considerable prying, in one direction, at least."

"Well, Penny won't know that," said Marcia, smiling.

"No, Penny won't know that," echoed her mother, bending forward a little and scanning the group upon the beach again. "I don't know where my eyes have been," with a perplexed frown; "I can see it plainly enough now! But doesn't it seem too good to be true? Well, I don't know why I said that either," she went on, as though Marcia had spoken. "I have often thought we take our blessings with bated breath,

as though we feared the Hand bestowing them would snatch them back if we seemed the least bit pleased! It isn't a very nice way of doing — I wouldn't like that attitude in my own children. Dear me, Marcia, they are coming home! What shall I do?" getting up hurriedly. "I can't see Penny out here! What shall I say to her — first? I'm all in a flutter!"

"You might speak about the dresses."

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Stuart, snatching at the idea. "I'll speak about the dresses. I'll say — I hope I shan't shake! I must be doing something. I wish I could manage to have my back toward her. I'll say: 'Penny dear, you are growing so fast, you must have some new dresses. I think I will take you up to Miss Shepard's next week, and get them started.' That is simple and easy to say, and natural, and I'll stay right here and say it," sitting down with sudden determination. "I'll have my book, and I needn't look at her much, and when the ice is broken, and she sees we have found it out, it won't be necessary to say another word. 'Penny dear,' rehearsing her part, 'you are growing so fast' — I mustn't forget to put that in — 'you are growing so fast, dear, you must have some new dresses. I will take you to Miss

Shepard next week and get them started.' It is neat, isn't it? and simple to say. But, Marcia, if I don't get on well, you help. 'Penny dear, you are growing so fast you must have some new dresses.'" She dropped her book, and bent sidewise to pick it up, while Grace — who appeared in the doorway behind them just in time to hear her mother say, as she recovered the book, "I'm all in a flutter — " looked in surprise from the back of one figure to the back of the other, but could make out nothing.

Simple as it seemed, Mrs. Stuart's agitation was so great, when Penelope came up the steps, she got no further than the first four words of her speech, "Penny, you are growing — " and there halted so long, that in sheer nervousness she threw her book up over her face and laughed and cried in a catchy way and laughed again, all in a breath.

"Yes," said Marcia, by way of helping, "you are growing, Penny — " but meeting the girl's happy eyes, said no more. Explanations seemed idle. There was no embarrassment in that bright face; only delighted surprise.

Penelope glanced around the circle. She had known it must come soon, but had not especially

thought of the matter this morning. There was a searching look in her bright eyes. They all knew she perceived; and the joy of it brought a deeper flush to her cheeks.

"I'm so glad you have noticed," she said simply. "I have wanted to tell you — I wanted you to see — to know what is being done." She paused a minute, uncertain how to proceed, then slipping her hand into her pocket drew forth "Science and Health" and, holding it up before them, said with earnest, tender cadences in her voice: "I hope you will all read this! It is Christian Science that has healed me."

## CHAPTER X

### "THE GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD"

PENELOPE drove to the station to meet her father that afternoon. It was the first occasion on which she had been allowed to drive by herself, and the novelty and dignity of it filled her with delight. Life had become wondrously sweet and jubilant to Penelope; and she turned a radiant face for a last glance backward and gayly shook her whip as she swept from the driveway and turned her horse's head in the direction of the station.

"I hope I have been wise," said Mrs. Stuart, with some misgiving, as the trap and the young driver disappeared around a bend in the road.

"Solomon couldn't have done more wisely," returned Grace. "Why Penelope fairly scintillated when Marcia proposed the plan!"

"I know. But—"

The sentence was unfinished, and Grace said reassuringly: "Penelope is all right. She knows

how to drive; she often drives when she is with us. Your chances would be better with her, mamma, than with me. Penelope never loses her head, and takes no risks."

"You say Penelope, too," commented her mother.

Grace's fair face turned to the window, and she thoughtfully followed the white line of the road stretching between the wide reaches of bayberry interspersed with the gray, half-concealed rocks for a silent moment. Then she said: "I know I do. I was trying to think why! I suppose because it suits her now."

"I have been sorry many times that we called her by that name. It was your father's idea; he wanted to name her for a friend of his mother's — Why, Grace, it was Mrs. Hathaway!"

Grace, whose eyes had roved on from the green and gray to the deep blue of the water, looked swiftly up. "How funny," said she, "I mean how oddly things come out!"

"I haven't remembered it until this minute! It has been so many years," said Mrs. Stuart, trying to account for the forgetfulness. "Then having never seen her!" suggestively.

"Does Penelope know?"

"Oh, no. At least, I think not. Your father may have told her, but I think if it had come to his mind he would have mentioned it to me instead. You came very near having the name, then Agnes. When it came to Penny," laughing, "I had made up my mind to submit. Resistance was useless; it was bound to be in the end, I could see; so poor Penny got the name. But I have always regretted having yielded the point."

"I wouldn't have minded. I like the name!"

"It's well enough for you — though I don't like it. But for Penny, what could be worse? Calling her Penny softened it in a measure. Penny is something less unsuitable than Penelope. There has always seemed a cruel fatality to me in the name having attached itself to her — poor child! It is so high-sounding!"

"You won't have to worry over that consideration any longer, mamma. She'll carry off the name all right!"

"So she will!" the little cloud of discontent vanishing as swiftly as a shadow sometimes flits across a sunny meadow. "Dear me, I had forgotten for an instant; shall I ever get used to the thought?"

"You are pretty well used to it already, aren't

you? I've heard a lot of planning to-day based on Penelope's prospects."

"It seems to me I can't do enough! Her little life has been so cramped."

"How the sails glisten, don't they?" said Grace, breaking into a silence. "A scene like this always reminds me — you know! About the ships that may be coming to us, and what they are bringing."

She glanced down upon "Science and Health," open on her lap, adding more to herself than to her mother, "Sometimes wonderful things are almost within our grasp before we even suspect their existence." A breeze stole in, sending a stray leafy pattern suddenly athwart the page, and she threw a quick glance over her shoulder to where, through the wide, open windows, was another stretch of sea, breaking into lovely greens, with the sun dipping toward the west; with more bayberry and gray rock; with the white wings of the gulls wide-spread against the blue sky, and a nearer view of the neat garden with its many bright-hued flowers. "Oh," said Grace, with a long breath, "what a day this has been! I have never known such a day. I feel — I don't know how I feel! As though I had glimpsed a new heaven and a new earth."

"It seems so far back to this morning," returned her mother, musingly. "Like a lifetime! I can't believe it was only this morning that — that I — that we — " she broke off with a little laugh. "And Penny! Marcia says she has unfolded to-day in the sunshine of our happiness, like a bud all ready to open and only waiting for the gladness of a sunny morning to throw its petals wide."

"Not bad," commented Grace. "And there is a sweetness about her, too, that suggests a blooming flower. Penelope is wonderful!"

"I can't help wishing we had known about it right along. It would have made such a difference. What comfort to have known what was coming! and the planning for it — and all. Penny would have had different dresses, and — oh, in a variety of ways, it would have made things different. You see your father knew. We might all have known, I think."

"We should have hindered," said Grace, promptly. "Suggesting, prying, watching, measuring, plotting — each one trying to steer the ark. We couldn't have helped it. Our very love, and anxiety to get the result, would have prompted the course most sure to retard it. We don't prod rosebuds to make them open; God," said Grace, with a

downward glance upon "Science and Health,' "takes care of their unfolding."

"Perhaps," returned her mother, after an interval. "Still I can't help wishing we could have known."

The measured wash of the incoming tide upon the beach broke monotonously upon the ear. Grace thought for a moment to its rhythm. Then she said: "It seems to me the Hathaways were wise in the advice they gave. At least this is certain: no greater thing could have been done, had we known, than has come without our knowledge. There is no gainsaying the fact of what Christian Science has done for Penelope!"

"You are an enthusiast, Grace! You can't expect the rest of us to march to your tune. I am in a whirl still! I wish," with a sudden frown, "I could know what Dr. Chadwick will say."

"I would like to see his face when he is told."

"Don't laugh. I think it is a very serious business. Still," brightening suddenly, "I would have employed Christian Science, in the face of all the world, had I been assured it would help Penny; and I am deeply grateful to it now, and

always shall be, and shall always stand for it in a way. But that doesn't keep me from wondering what Dr. Chadwick may say — and fearing him a little."

"There are two members of the family Dr. Chadwick will never budge — three! For I'm sure, from what Penelope says, he'll never stir papa. It's the newness you're afraid of, mamma — that, and other minor considerations, such as 'What will people say?' That doesn't affect me. I don't care what they say!"

"You heard of it first from Mr. Jack Prescott," with a rueful laugh. "Grace, I meant you shouldn't see him at Christmas, lest he should enlighten you further upon the subject; and here, in July, I find you curled up, with 'Science and Health' on your lap, and haven't a word of protest."

"You don't wish to protest, do you?"

"That is just it. I don't wish to. And yet —"

"You are afraid you ought," finished Grace. "But, really, is Jack Prescott coming at Christmas?"

"I think, Grace, he scented an opportunity."

"Perhaps he won't come when he hears we are all converted."

"Perhaps. But I suspect he will come to

confirm! Dear me," after a pause, and with sudden dejection, "sometimes I wish you were all little again!"

Grace laughed a merry peal. "Marcia and all?" said she. "Poor George! But that would throw *him* back into the pinafore state, wouldn't it?"

"And now to think of Penny! Dear me! shall I ever get familiar with the thought of the change in her? It comes over me with a shock every now and then. You don't know, Grace, how it affects me! I feel almost obliged to pinch myself; it seems to me I must waken up soon and find it all a dream."

"The other was the dream," said Grace. "How much we owe to that dear Love Hathaway! How I would like to see her!"

"What did Penny say about them? I have heard so much, seen so much, felt so much to-day, nothing is very clear — except one thing."

"That is clear enough, isn't it? Never shall I forget the way Penelope looked, framed by the vine-wreathed entrance at the head of the piazza steps, holding up 'Science and Health' in both hands, and saying with that glance around, and that wonderful light in her face, 'I hope you will

all read this. It is Christian Science that has healed me.' I really thought *I* was dreaming!"

"I didn't know you were there until afterward."

"I had just come out. I was standing in the doorway — opposite Penelope, facing her. You turned white as a sheet, mamma."

"It shocked me; and no wonder, considering I had been so anxious to get you all down here, away from the possibility, as I thought, of hearing a word of Christian Science! It is not surprising I was startled to hear Penny say what she did."

"I think we behaved beautifully," said Grace, fingering the book on her lap, and looking away over the water. "There was very little excitement — considering what it meant! and that made it comfortable for Penelope." "We were most of us prepared for something," she thought, "though we didn't know what." Then suddenly: "Oh, you asked about the Hathaways! They have crossed the pond for the summer, but are coming home early in September on account of the schools. They all went together, Penelope said."

"I can't think how Penelope can have kept all these things to herself," Mrs. Stuart frowned.

"She hasn't heard this summer," Grace said, looking at her mother curiously. "All she knows is what Mrs. Hathaway told papa the day before we came down here. Oh, yes, she knew the day they sailed!"

"I should think Jerome would tell *me* these things; it is more natural, I should say."

Grace opened her lips, but closed them again without speaking, and presently her mother's thoughts trailed off upon another subject. "I wish," she said, "I knew just what to say to our friends. I have written Mrs. Selfridge, and I told her Penny has been reading 'Science and Health,' and that she says reading the book has healed her. But of course I can't say that to any one else! Can I? Having Christian Science in the family, as one might say, makes Mrs. Selfridge's case a little different. I wrote Mrs. Damon also, and mentioned to her how Penny is growing, but I didn't say anything about Christian Science." She looked at Grace.

"Ask papa," she suggested.

"Nonsense. As though I didn't know what he will say! I know as well as though I had asked him. And the larger the characters in which he

can say it, or have it said, the better it will suit him!"

"You might as well tell it, mamma. It is sure to come out."

"Of course it will come out! I'm willing it *should* come out. I don't want you to think I'm afraid of its coming out. Only — I think we should be wise about it; not put it too strong — not startle people. You are just like your father, Grace!" in an impatient burst. "I know exactly what you are thinking! But one can be grateful without blowing a trumpet. Grateful!" There was a sudden choke in her voice, as the feeling rushed over her of what this change in Penelope meant to them all. "I guess I am. Why, Grace, there are no words in all the languages of all the world in which to say how grateful I am. But," dubiously, "I can't help wishing Christian Science was of the church. Then I should know exactly what to do."

"You would feel sure then that it is good and true, wouldn't you?"

"Why, certainly. I shouldn't have a doubt about it," was the prompt reply. "Now," suspiciously, "of what are you thinking?"

"Of that Bible verse, 'By their fruits ye shall

know them.' It is a great and good work that has been done for Penelope, and only that which is good could have wrought it, it seems to me."

"I don't say it isn't good!"

"Go further, mamma, and say it *is!*"

Mrs. Stuart slowly furled and unfurled a fan she had picked up. "It is puzzling to know what to say," she returned moodily.

As the train slowed into the station, Mr. Stuart, craning his head sidewise, to see which daughter or daughters had come to meet him, was considerably surprised by the sight of Penelope sitting high and erect, alone in the shining trap. Hastily gathering his papers together, he swung himself from the car before it came to a standstill, and with quickened footsteps crossed the platform.

"Well," he said cheerily, climbing in beside her, "radiant as the morning, aren't we? No. You drive. I wish to see what sort of a coachman I have. And so," peering into her face, "it is all out, I perceive."

"Yes, papa. And so easily and simply! Divine Love surely does lead. I knew the instant I stepped on to the piazza and looked around at their faces that they had become conscious of the change in me. So I held up 'Science and

Health.' I didn't have time to think what to do, you know, but I guess, papa, it was the wisest thing I could have done, for we were not a bit embarrassed; only pleased and a little excited, and so happy!"

"Held up 'Science and Health'?" Mr. Stuart repeated questioningly, putting his arm over the back of Penelope's seat, and half turning to look at her.

"I couldn't think what to say," she explained smilingly, "it came so unexpectedly, you know. So I held up 'Science and Health,' and said I hoped they would read it — and that Christian Science had healed me."

"You couldn't have done better, little one," he answered thoughtfully. Then: "I must find another name," he laughed. "You are not exactly a little one now."

"Isn't it lovely!" she said gayly. "I'm to have some new dresses, too, papa, aren't you glad? Mamma says I'm not fit to be seen."

"It isn't a bad idea. I had some thought of buying one to-day and bringing it home to you. Ready made, you know. What sort of a selector of gowns do you think I would make? Would you trust me?"

"Fine!" she laughed merrily. "Yes, indeed. What color would it have been?"

"Red," with decision.

"Oh, good!" she laughed. They were very merry for a few minutes over the red dress that might have been.

"Do you think it would have been at all hot-looking for summer?" he asked anxiously.

"No, indeed," scornfully. "I had just as soon wear a red dress in July as not — sooner. We like red, don't we?" with a quick little glance into his face, that seemed to say how confidential and comfortable they were. "Perhaps I'll have red dresses now!"

"Always a red dress now," he answered gayly.

"Do you think I drive well?" she asked demurely, after a minute's silence.

"You beat Spencer all hollow." Spencer was the coachman. "What would you say to a saddle-horse?" He watched the color flush into her cheeks and spread over her neck and ears. "Bay," he added, "of the name of Firefly."

"For me?" she gasped. "Do you mean for me, papa?"

"It has been whispered into his ears that his mistress's name is Penelope," he answered, pinch-

ing the cheek nearest him. "I guess the bird who told me the secret of somebody's wish for a saddle-horse was pretty nearly right."

"Oh, please take the lines, while I thank you," said Penelope, excitedly, putting them into his hands. "I never was so overjoyed! How did you know?" throwing her arms about his neck.

"We had better call a halt, perhaps," Mr Stuart said in a smothered voice. "Whoa, Tom, whoa! It is bewildering, isn't it, old boy? There, now," yielding himself to be hugged and kissed, "it's a trifle tamer — but we are surer of getting home to dinner. What do you think of the name Firefly?"

"Oh, great!" said Penelope, with an unconscious imitation of Stella's tone and manner when expressing satisfaction. "It's the most beautiful name he could have! It will remind me of the night when we saw the fireflies — not that I should forget it, though. I have always wanted to ride horseback — but how did you know?"

She was leaning with her head against his arm, and he looked down sidewise into her face, as he answered: —

"Didn't I tell you — a bird let me into the secret."

She studied his mysterious face for a minute. "Oh, it was Marcia," she cried. "Now I know it was. I see it in your eyes. I told Marcia I meant to learn to ride, but," with a little ecstatic hug of the arm she was leaning against, "I didn't expect to have a horse of my very own. I didn't expect once, ever to be able to ride horseback," she added quietly, with a backward, mental glance. "I never even dreamed of such a thing! I only knew I wanted to. But that," brightly, "was before we knew about Christian Science."

"What should we do without Christian Science?" her father said meditatively, more as though he were speaking to himself than addressing her.

"I don't know," Penelope answered, in much the same manner, "I can't think. I shouldn't know how to live!"

"But we have it," with his quick, bright smile, "and no words can say how grateful we are. Our lives must attest that fact. It is the greatest blessing that can come to any one; and you and I, Penelope, are not likely to forget what we owe to it."

"No," she answered softly, with that wonderful light which always came into her face when she spoke of Christian Science breaking over it. She

held the lines again. Tom had recovered from his "bewilderment," and she was endeavoring to wipe out the memory of the confusion she had occasioned by a strict and sedate attention to the business of driving. "Grace is devouring 'Science and Health,'" she observed presently.

"Grace has always been a hungry little soul. It seems to me from the time she could speak she has been asking questions I couldn't answer. And mamma?"

Penelope took her eyes from the horse's ears, for one glance at her father's face. "Mamma was lovely. Oh, so dear and sweet! But she thinks it's strange, if Christian Science is good, it didn't come through the church."

"We must wait patiently for mamma. She was educated in the faith that there is nothing desirable outside the Episcopal church. But mamma's heart is right, and she will come to see the truth and beauty of Christian Science, though it is not of the church."

Spencer was waiting to take the horse, and Mr. Stuart and Penelope alighted in the midst of a family a-tiptoe with happy excitement and curiosity, their faces set in smiles and curves of delighted anticipation. But Mrs. Stuart alone

essayed to speak. "Jerome," she began, and quite unexpectedly burst into tears. He let her cry upon his shoulder without a word, but her quick sobs called out a handkerchief here and there, and the general atmosphere became threatening. But Marcia, with her arm over Stella's shoulder, started with a resolute step up the walk to the house, and the rest followed. Mrs. Stuart quickly recovered; by the time Helen, who was the tail end of the procession, had reached the top step, she, laughing in a hysterical fashion, was at the bottom.

"False alarm," commented Grace. "Flags of truce furled and retired. Dewey onslaught imminent, but strategically averted."

"Hush," said Marcia, but she smiled.

"There is nothing to cry for," Helen said. "'I'm ashamed of us,' as Agnes used to say."

"I expect it is because we are all so glad," Penelope added. She was not crying; there were no signs of tears in her happy eyes.

"I expect it is," said Marcia.

"Come here, Penny," Mrs. Stuart called, as she stepped upon the piazza. She was still nervous, and her voice had a high, unusual pitch. "To think, Jerome, that I didn't see," with a laugh not unlike Stella's giggle. "I don't know where my

eyes have been. You might have told me, I think." Hysterical again. "But then it's all right now — you needn't feel badly to think you didn't. I've done nothing but laugh and cry all day. It's foolish, I know, but I can't seem to help it." She had her arm around Penelope's waist, holding her forward a little, as though inviting his attention to the change in her. "No wonder last spring's dresses can't be made to do," she wound up, with a face like an April sky — threatening tears, but full of sunshine.

At this reference to her dress, Mr. Stuart shot a glance at Penelope that changed his wife's mood. "Now, what does that mean?" she demanded archly. "More secrets, I wonder?"

"It needn't remain a secret, eh, Penelope?" with a laughing lift of his brows. "I had half a mind to buy a dress for her to-day, mamma, and bring it home with me. That is the secret. I was only deterred by the consideration that I didn't know the size. I thought I had better take measurements to-night, and get it to-morrow." There was a general laugh. "It would have been red," he ended, with enjoyment.

"Red! Red! Papa Stuart!" they chorussed.

"I suppose it would have been woollen too, wouldn't it?" Grace added.

"I hadn't considered that point. But very likely. Penelope and I agreed the red would be nice."

"Oh — you two!" said Mrs. Stuart, with a wag of her head altogether felicitous. "You have latent capacities unsuspected by me, I dare say, Jerome. But in this instance it seems a little safer to confide in Miss Shepard."

"She has had more experience in this particular line, no doubt," he shrugged, and drifted to a seat. Stella promptly perched upon one arm of his chair, and Agnes upon the other. "I wonder, Jerome, if there are many fathers whose children swarm about them as yours do about you?" his wife said, jogging comfortably as she beamed upon the trio in the chair.

"I hope so," he answered, looking first at one blooming face and then at the other, as they half met, leaning toward him. "They are the losers if they do not. I like to have my rosebuds about me!"

"That is just it, papa," Marcia said, stopping at the back of his chair, and with both hands under his chin, tipping back his head to kiss him. "You

have always made us feel it's a pleasure to you to have us near!"

"You mustn't incorporate a suggestion of its having been done with an effort, when you credit me with that, Marcia. I have never had too much of my children yet!"

"I don't see what you'll do pretty soon," Stella said, with serious consideration, sticking up his hair with her little fingers in a way she thought very becoming. "Your rosebuds are getting so big. Penny is a lapful now! Do you remember how you used to take four of us at a time? One on each knee, and one on each arm of the chair."

"I'm not likely to forget, Pussy."

"But everybody is getting so big, you'll have to take less and less! I suppose you could hold Helen alone, couldn't you?" doubtfully.

"I try to — when she lets me."

Helen had taken her sewing from the little work-table. "As though I don't esteem it a privilege," she laughed, glancing up.

"Sometimes I wish they were all small again," Mrs. Stuart said, stopping in her rocking, and looking pensively out at sea.

"I don't want to be smaller than going to bed at eight o'clock," Stella said promptly. "That's

small enough. Honestly, papa," with a giggle, "did you mean to buy Penny a red dress? R–E–D!"

"She shall have a red dress in the fall if she wishes it," Mrs. Stuart said indulgently. Then she drew in her breath with a sharp sound. Was it true she could speak in that way of Penelope? For an instant she half doubted it. "For all the world as I might have said Grace could have a blue dress if she wished it," she thought. This latitude as regarded Penelope was new; she could not, in all instances, quickly adjust her thought to it. But there was Penelope on her father's knee, smiling and happy, and her brow cleared. "I'll get used to it in time," she said in a gay little whisper to herself. "I have only to look at her to know it is true."

Penelope leaned over and whispered in her father's ear, and then straightened up and looked at him. He nodded brightly, and Stella said, "I heard something about fireflies!" Penelope's face went blank for an instant, and she took her under lip between her teeth. She had planned, and her father had consented, to make a secret of the new saddle-horse, and surprise the family very much by his advent on the morrow. She looked from Stella to Agnes and back again. Then a

gleam of fun twinkled in her eyes. "There'll be a great big Firefly to-morrow night," she said, "the biggest firefly you've ever seen."

"Pooh, that wouldn't be much. But there aren't any fireflies now!"

"There'll be a Firefly to-morrow night — Won't there, papa?" He nodded. "*Enormous!*" making his mouth into a pucker and opening his eyes very wide.

Mrs. Stuart, looking at her husband over the bunch of heads, said interestedly: "What is it? You and Penny are full of your secrets."

Mr. Stuart laughed. "Well, little girl, I guess we must answer mamma," he said. "We can mystify our mates — but when it comes to mamma!" She had a regretful look, but turned her face eagerly to watch the effect upon her mother as her father said, "I have bought a horse for Penelope."

The first effect of this announcement on Mrs. Stuart was the leaping up of that old fear — the sense of Penelope's limitations — and a shadow scurried across her face. But it was gone so quickly, one watching closely could scarce have been sure of its flitting. "You have?" she said, in pleased cadences.

"Papa Stuart," cried Agnes, the color spreading in a sudden wave over her face and neck. "*Aren't* you a darling!"

"Honest! Have you?" said Stella, bending over to see from his eyes if he were really serious.

Penelope sprang from her father's knee and went over to her mother. She saw the scudding of that small cloud, and knew what it meant. The joy in her heart was well-nigh tumultuous as she said to herself that she could no longer cast a shadow; no longer be a sorrow to her mother. Her eyes spoke eloquently of what was in her heart, though her lips uttered not a word of it. Her mother understood; she took the little hands in her own and patted them together softly. "We are very happy, aren't we, Penny?" with eyes suddenly suffused. But she winked the moisture back, adding, "And a *horse*," with an intonation that expressed much more than the words conveyed.

"Isn't it lovely I can have him?" Penelope said, putting back the little curls about her mother's brow, and thinking how good and beautiful she was.

"Indeed it is," she answered, with unmistakable heartiness. "Dear me, dear me," trailing off into sudden retrospection.

"It is perfectly delightful," said Helen, who had dropped her sewing upon her lap to look and listen. "It seems to me all the lovely things in the world are happening to-day!"

"Then it *is* true," cried Stella, convinced by Helen's speech. "Oh, isn't it *great!* Will you get me one, papa?"

"When you are fourteen, do you mean?"

"No, I mean when I'm nine!" taking him by both ears, and pretending to shake him. "Oh, aren't you a *dear!* to go buying horses when nobody knows anything about it. I want a black one!"

"Firefly is bay. You shall ride him, Stella! We will all take turns," said Penelope.

"I want mine to be black — when I have one," with a sidelong glance at her father. "My hair is so light, I think I should look better on black."

"What if the hair has grown dark by the time the horse arrives, vain Pussy?" her father asked, playfully pinching her ear.

"Oh, he mustn't be poky," she answered, tweaking his ear in return. "I don't expect him to take much time coming."

"I like a bay horse," Penelope said. "I like

black too," with thoughtful consideration for Stella's preference. "But I believe I had just a little bit rather have bay. How did you come to know, papa, that I liked bay so much?"

"You didn't post it up anywhere, I suppose?"

Penelope looked puzzled. "Aren't you a joker!" cried Agnes. "Look into his eyes, Penny," seizing his face with both hands and holding it in her direction, "and see what a joker he is."

Marcia, who had been looking through the irregular openings among the vine leaves, across the blue sea dotted with sails, to where a fierce glitter marked the site of an island lighthouse; thinking in a desultory fashion of what that lighthouse meant to those sailing the now-smiling waters, when the waves were mountain high, and the winds boisterous; thinking, too, of Penelope, the two trains of thought running on side by side, mingling, separating, touching again; turned around at this and leaning against the piazza balustrade, with both hands resting on it, stood smiling.

"I know where the idea came from," Penelope said, glancing at her. "I guessed the first thing, didn't I, papa?"

Not waiting for an answer, she went on blissfully: "I knew the day I told you I was going to learn to ride horseback that I would. But you didn't quite believe it, did you, Marcia?"

Marcia looked nonplussed. "I knew something had happened to you, dear," she said finally. "But I didn't, of course, know what. How could I suspect what great things were coming?"

Penelope laughed. "Oh, weren't you a surprised girl?" she said. "I can see just how you looked! 'Penny Stuart,' you said, 'what has happened to you?' Then we picked the crocuses, and said 'they were prophets of the spring, and that what they promised always came true;' and I applied it to what I knew was coming to me, and they seemed to confirm what I felt, and to tell me that what I was looking for and expecting would surely come. And it has."

"And it has," Marcia repeated softly.

No one spoke for a moment. Only the wash of the water broke with measured beat into the silence.

"You see I knew why I could ride horseback," Penelope resumed suddenly, with a bright look at Marcia, "and you did not. I *knew*, when Love

Hathaway told me God didn't make me deformed, that He didn't! It seemed so plain. When she said I was God's perfect child, I *knew* I was. Christian Science is so convincing! I wanted to tell you all lots of times," with a sweep of the eye that took in the attentive faces, all addressed to her, "but I couldn't. It is better I didn't. Now you can't help knowing Christian Science is true!"

Grace, sitting upright in the hammock swung across one corner of the piazza (swaying a little at intervals, with her feet on the floor), said, in her enthusiastic fashion, "Christian Science is the greatest thing in *all the world*."

Mrs. Stuart's glance turned quickly upon Grace; but the burdened years, when Penelope's deformity weighed upon and shadowed her life, stood out before her vision, in place of the sunny head. "Indeed it is," she said, with a positiveness that had found its way into her voice several times that day. "It is the greatest thing in all the world. Oh, Penny — child!" stretching out her hands to her in a hungry impulse, "how can I ever be thankful enough!"

Mr. Stuart withdrew his eyes from a vista of twinkling shadows with which the sunlight cov-

ered that portion of the piazza visible to him between the encroaching figures of his daughters, to rest them in surprise upon his wife. He had not expected so unqualified a declaration from her. He could see her only by an elevation of his chin, over Stella's shoulder, but the sight thus obtained of her beaming face filled him with gladness. This did not look like having to "wait for mamma" very long. "We owe Christian Science a debt of gratitude we can never pay," he said, watching her fondle Penelope, whom she had pulled upon her lap.

"I haven't hardly had a chance to see a word of 'Science and Health,'" said Stella, in that mature way which, as a rule, provoked a retort from Grace, and glancing in her direction, as she spoke, indicating in this manner by whom she had been debarred from this privilege.

"Well, Pussy," soothingly, "you shall have a copy of your own," her father said. "We must each have a copy of 'Science and Health.' I will order them to-morrow."

"Oh, goodie!" with a rhythmic swing of her long, dangling, black-stockinged legs. "Grace!" with a forward lurch of the body, "I'm going to have a 'Science and Health' of my own!"

Grace looked up from the book inquiringly.

"We all are," Agnes said. "Papa is going to get us each a copy."

Mrs. Stuart's face took on a look of calculation. "We don't need so many, do we?" she objected. "We are not likely all to be reading at once." She was smoothing Penelope's braids, and paused with her hand resting upon them to look at her husband. "Are they expensive?" she added.

"I don't consider them so."

"How many will there be?" cried Stella, pointing with a childish-looking forefinger and counting (as though she were ignorant by what, numerically, her family was represented). "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven — eight. Eight little black books with gold stamps, lying about for all the world like Bibles and Prayer-books."

"They are not Prayer-books, Stella!" Mrs. Stuart's tone spoke volumes.

Mr. Stuart's expression changed. He thought again of what Penelope had told him, and of his reply. "They are of greater value, Flora," he said quietly.

"Oh!" the breath was a half gasp.

Then she glanced at Penelope, and the tide of her thought turned swiftly. She caught her in

a close embrace; but Penelope was more than she could handle gracefully; and Mr. Stuart, his chin still in the air as he peered over Stella's bobbing shoulders, now this way, now that, smiled suddenly. It was safe to yield to time the settlement of mamma's estimate of "Science and Health," he saw.

Grace had been listening and watching, swinging slowly in her hammock. She took up "Science and Health" again. "The Prayer-book is well enough," she observed, "as far as it goes. But it *can't* heal the sick, and 'Science and Health' *does*."

"I want you, Jerome," said Mrs. Stuart that evening, as he entered the library where she was writing, "to advise me. Just look at this list! People to be written to. Isn't it appalling? But I love to do it — only I feel such haste. Why, of *course* there is hurry. How can you, Jerome? I would like every one to know all about it this minute! It seems to me I can't wait. I think this is a clever scheme, don't you? checking off the names as fast as the letters are written. It seems so businesslike! Then it insures everybody being written to, and guards against what would be a greater mistake — writing to the same person

twice. I wouldn't like to seem too — well, you know! I have written to Mrs. Selfridge; see? *her* name is crossed off, and to Mrs. Damon. Now I am writing to Mrs. Everett. I can hardly wait for them to hear the news. But," with a most teachable expression, "just how would you put it, dear?"

"State the facts."

"About Christian Science having been the means, do you mean?"

"Certainly."

"No. I don't mean to do that. It doesn't seem to me wise to be too explicit."

Mr. Stuart laughed, but as his wife frowned and seemed not to enjoy his levity, he added seriously: "Well, Flora, be natural. I can't give you better advice. Write just as you feel at the moment."

"I want my conscience clear," she rejoined, pressing the top of her pen-stock against her lips, and looking inquiringly at the desk. Her husband regarded her whimsically for a minute, then he said: —

"You need give yourself no anxiety on that head, Flora. Express yourself naturally; say what you mean at the moment, and you will find it will be quite right."

"You think so?" with an upward glance. "Well, I shouldn't be surprised if you are right. That is your advice, then?" He laughed, and she added, "I don't see why you laugh in that way! Is it your advice, or isn't it?"

"We will call it so."

"You make one so uncomfortable," she said. "I know just what you think. I think so too — only I am afraid of the consequences. Who can say what a commotion it may create among our friends?"

"Penny would say there is nothing to fear."

"Penny! Isn't she wonderful? I wish you could have seen her when she discovered we all knew. Every time I think of it, it reminds me of a picture I have seen somewhere of St. Michael going forth to fight the wars of Heaven; holding up that book and looking so — fearless. She's always been such a shrinking little thing."

"How do you think our friends will feel about Christian Science, when they see her?"

"Dear me! They can't think but one thing."

Hannah had been away for several days, on a visit to her cousin, Jane Cummings, but arrived home this evening, soon after sunset, and was met at the door by Delia, who breathlessly im-

parted the facts regarding Penelope. Hannah's tawny hair seemed to rise, and she grew so white, Delia, startled, clutched at her arm.

"Come in," she said, "you'll fall off the steps. Dear me, I didn't mean to give you such a turn!"

She tried to steer her into the kitchen, but Hannah, aware of her intent, wrenched herself free, and whisked up the stairs to her room. Delia stood amazed for a minute. Then, "I guess you're all right if you can pound up the stairs like that," she muttered, and went into the kitchen to talk over Hannah's reception of the news with the cook.

Hannah locked the door of her room, and closed both windows, and then began stalking about back and forth, back and forth, giving occasional utterance to such expressions as, "Goodness!" "Gracious!" "My, my!"

Her hat, which suffered at each successive stage of her emotions, became very much awry, but she forgot to take it off. With Hannah, excitement resulted in a certain angularity of personal appearance. She seemed to become all corners. "So they know," she muttered, walking stiffly to and fro. "I don't know whether I'm glad I wasn't here or not. My, my! But what's Christian Science?"

She stopped abruptly for the consideration of this point, as Delia's words came back to her. "Pshaw!" she exclaimed contemptuously, marching on again. "That Delia never gets a thing right! Christian Science! Who ever heard of Christian Science?"

Occasionally she put her ear to the crack of the door, and listened. Penelope's room was near, and she was waiting for the sound of Penelope in her room. Just what she would do when Penelope should come, she had not thought, but it was for this sound she was listening.

It had become quite dark, and she was still stalking back and forth, with her hat over one ear and her hair straggling, when a soft knock, she instantly recognized, arrested her quick march, and threw her into a flutter of excitement and apprehension so great, that it was only after considerable fumbling with the key, and fruitless clutching at the knob, that she succeeded in opening the door.

"Why, Hannah," Penelope exclaimed, with difficulty repressing the impulse to laugh, as the light from the hall fell over, and clearly revealed, the grotesque-looking figure, "what is the matter? But never mind. I am so glad to see you! Delia

told me you had come, and I ran right up. It is nice to have you home again!"

Hannah stared for a minute, and then without the slightest warning burst into tears. "Oh, my beauty," she cried, throwing her hands up over her face, and backing in a twitchy fashion until she brought up against the foot of her own bed. "My dear, darling, precious pet! So they've found it out, have they? I should think it's time! My, my! But I never expected to see this day — not until lately, I didn't!"

"Why, Hannah," Penelope said brokenly, moved by this unexpected conduct on the part of her lifetime friend. She took the woman's wrists in a gentle grasp, and tried to remove her hands from her face. "Hannah — dear Hannah," she kept saying, and the tears welled up to her own bright eyes. Then she brought Hannah's head to rest upon her own shoulder. "There is nothing to cry for," she said soothingly. "There is nothing to cry for, Hannah."

"I know there isn't, my pretty," said Hannah, shaken by sobs. "But I seem — to have to do it — it's all — jo-oy!"

"But don't cry any more," pleaded Penelope.

"I knew it, I knew it!" Hannah burst out, in

a voice smothered by the pressure of her own hands, and by Penelope's close embrace. "I've seen it, I've seen it — oh, my precious pet! I knew, I knew! *I* couldn't be deceived! But I didn't betray it. No — not by so much as the motion of an eyelid! I hardly dared to speak for fear I'd let it out!"

"Isn't it beautiful, Hannah?" Penelope said. "It is something for us to be thankful for all our lives, isn't it?"

"Ain't it?" said Hannah, jerking herself upright, and making furious dabs at her eyes with her handkerchief. The hat was more awry than ever, but Penelope forgot that there was anything comical in its appearance.

"Shrinking!" cried Hannah.

She laughed suddenly, but a sob caught the laugh and shook it and mastered it, and there she was, crying again. "But I didn't contradict," sobs punctuating the sentences, "no indeed — and I altered the skirts to keep pace with the dresses — at night, my own darling — and no one knew. But *I* saw — I knew months ago — before your birthday *I* saw a change! But I wouldn't tell — and I didn't even let you see I knew! Only now you know; and I am glad you know and," be-

coming quite suddenly composed, "I'm happier than I ever was in my life before, and will go on being happier and happier."

Penelope knelt that night by a window in her room that commanded a view of the sea, and looked at the shining track the moon made upon the water, stretching on and on before her till it seemed to really meet the sky, with her thoughts going back into the past. Hannah's agitation called up old memories. She had parted so gently from the pain and sorrow which had formed so large a part of life, as she had known it, until a few short months ago, that she had not known when she slipped the burden — only that it was gone. But as she knelt there, the moonlight gently touching her thoughtful face, the past moved before her in slow procession. She saw again the "little dark room," and the weeping, misshapen child upon the floor; saw herself shrinking even from the eyes of those who loved her; cowering behind doors and in dark corners from the sight of strangers; fearful of a word of praise for that which she admired, lest that word should call attention to her own unloveliness; shivering in the presence of children's curious eyes; waking in the night

with that dull burden on her heart, and crying softly with the pain of living, as she looked at the solemn stars; feeling a reference to her deformity in every glance; filled with unsatisfied yearnings, doubt, despair; praying to God for help she did not expect would be given; life stretching out a desert before her, until — until that spring morning when Love Hathaway had found her in the pine grove, and had talked to her of Christian Science.

"Christian Science," she mused, "has changed it all. It has shown me that God, my Father, never afflicts His child — that I *am* His child — that I *am* of Him — that that which caused me suffering did not belong to me. My loving Father never sent it. Oh, it is so true. I have proved it now — I *know* it is true."

With sudden intensity of action she stretched out her hands toward that silvery track upon the water, and with eyes uplifted to the pale little stars above the moon, said in a voice hardly above her breath, but vibrant with the earnestness of her feeling, "Father, I thank Thee, Lord of heaven and earth."

## CHAPTER XI

### "THROUGH A GLASS, DARKLY"

MRS. SELFRIDGE read Mrs. Stuart's letter with many stifled ejaculations of surprise. There was a small pile of letters on her lap, some of them already opened and read; her hat lay on the rock beside her; the sweet, invigorating mountain breezes fluttered the waving locks about her puckered brow. Mr. Selfridge glanced up at her inquiringly as she gave vent to these smothered sounds, mere whispers of amazement; but returned each time, without comment, to the perusal of his own, uninteresting-looking typewritten sheets. They had wandered out to this favorite spot with the morning mail. A brook gurgled musically at their feet; not far away it formed a tiny cascade, and the rush of the eager water was in the air. Mrs. Selfridge read the letter through twice, then extended it toward her husband, without turning her face to him, and said not a word. The rest of the letters had

lost their interest. She folded her hands over them, and with a fixed pucker of her pretty brows sat looking down upon the mossy course of the twisting little stream, as though hoping to extract from it the solution of a puzzling problem. She glanced up but once — when her husband gave a long, low, surprised whistle. He made no other sign until he had finished his rather slow perusal of the letter. Then carefully folding it and reaching for its envelope, he said with a quizzical glance, "Well — what do we think of Christian Science now?"

"I don't know that it is Christian Science," with a little flounce toward him. "There is nothing so wonderful about it — really. Girls of her age *ought* to grow."

Mr. Selfridge eyed his little wife for a moment in silence; then he laughed. "You wouldn't have given much for her chances at growing three or four months ago," he said.

The violet shook itself. "I want you to promise me one thing, Richmond, will you?"

"I've been promising all my life; I begin to think it's time to quit," he laughed.

"I haven't anything against Christian Science, you know, Richmond — really," said his wife,

with unusual seriousness, looking away to where the sunbeams, filtering through the trees, made patches of golden light on the greensward. "Of course I haven't. You must understand that. It may be a good thing in its way — I'm sure I hope it is. There is need of good in the world, no doubt — and if it brings relief to the suffering, I am glad with all my heart that it can do so. *But*, it is unknown here, Richmond, and it *isn't* pleasant to be made conspicuous."

"And I'm to promise not to be conspicuous?"

"I know perfectly well you will," pettishly, "you are too big to hide anything — then you don't like to. But I *hope* you won't mention it. Say you won't. Come — to please me. There is no reason why we should," argumentatively. "It doesn't touch us. One could hardly blame the Stuarts if they do — "

"I thought it was by no means sure they were indebted to Christian Science," interrupted her husband.

"Don't be silly. How can you say such a thing? Penny — "

"But children of Penny's age grow, you know."

"Some great, big, blond men don't grow one bit in wisdom! And, Richmond, *don't* tell Jack!"

"I think Jack ought to know!"

"I thought perhaps he ought, so I meant to give him the least little bit of a hint. What are you laughing for? You said yourself he ought to know! But I wish Jack wouldn't come at Christmas; I feel sure Mrs. Stuart will be more unwilling now than ever to have Grace see him. They are *certain* to get upon the theme."

"He won't wait till Christmas," said her husband, teasingly, "your hint will bring him post-haste."

"Then I won't write! I'm just determined to head Jack off. You needn't look like that! I'm quite in earnest. I sympathize with Mrs. Stuart. I saw that night we were there, and the conversation turned upon the subject of Christian Science, just how she felt about it, and I mean to do all I can to keep Jack and Grace apart. I should feel just as she does if it were Rosamond — though Rosamond is less easily influenced than Grace." A bird uttered a high, clear note, and the bright eyes swept upward, lingering for a moment on the irregular patches of blue sky showing amid the interlacing branches of the trees. "Besides," she went on, bringing her eyes to bear once more upon her husband, "we don't need it. We are all well and strong."

"How about Nick?"

The blue eyes opened wide. "It doesn't do that sort of thing," she said.

"I understood from Jack that it did."

The pretty brows gave a despairing lift. "Who would ever dream you are a clever judge?" said she.

"You aren't so easily deceived, are you?" he returned, with a shrug of his broad shoulders, his eyes on a tiny blue flower he was lightly twirling between his big thumb and forefinger.

"You get such erratic ideas! But I'm convinced you are clever, dear — I read the papers sometimes, and they seem so sure of it. You think I'm an inconsequent little piece, I know; I could tell it from the way you twirl that flower. I feel exactly as though you were doing the same thing with me, and thanking your lucky stars you've got a blue flower for your buttonhole. Well — I always knew you couldn't have married me for my mind, so it doesn't disturb me."

"Perhaps I thought I had enough for both."

"I have never felt a deficiency in respect of it — so it must have been supplied in some way. But you know, Richmond," suddenly serious, "that Nicholas is only cross. I ought not to

say it — poor boy! I am sorry for him — but I really am afraid it's true. Don't mention Christian Science to any of the children, Richmond!"

"May I mention it to any one?" he laughed, tossing the blue flower into her lap.

"Not to any one," sticking the frail offering in the opened end of an envelope. "Not here. Not when we get home. Let's go on — I'm tired of sitting, and I don't feel like reading the other letters. My! wasn't that whiff delicious, from out that cool-looking glade? It was like the breath of May flowers! You must see, Richmond," casting her blue eyes up to his face, as she swung easily back to her first subject, "that it is wise to wait until we see how Christian Science is received by our friends before we commit ourselves. I fancy the Stuarts will be quiet about it. Telling us is quite a different thing from making it generally known."

But Mrs. Selfridge very soon discovered she was wrong in this conclusion. Letters from mutual friends all contained references to Penelope Stuart's healing. A few confessed to a previous knowledge of the wonders wrought by Christian Science; some asked questions; but it was easy of discernment that Mrs. Selfridge would have

plenty of company in the path she had marked out for her own treading.

Letters of congratulation, filled with the warmest expressions of sympathetic pleasure, flowed in upon Mrs. Stuart. In the letters she had sent out, some contained such passages as these: "Hannah and I have been busy enough this summer letting down Penny's dresses; she is growing so fast it is next to impossible to keep her in order." Or, "you should see Penny! she has taken such a start." Or, "Poor Hannah! Penny has kept her busy early and late. She has absolutely outgrown every dress she has." But in most of the letters she made a frank avowal of what Christian Science had done for Penelope. In the answers, however, the majority contained no reference to the subject. Mrs. Stuart, pleased and happy, did not notice the omission, save in a few instances, where it brought relief from a haunting dread she had felt of possible censure. The good feeling and interest expressed, filled her with satisfaction, and she beamed contentedly upon her husband, as he sat one evening looking over a number of these letters she had given him to read.

"'Neither will they be persuaded, though one

rose from the dead,' " he muttered, making a neat pile of the letters, and holding them in his hand.

"What did you say, Jerome?"

"I was thinking aloud, I believe. It is strange, Flora, how few of these letters mention Christian Science directly."

"I hadn't noticed. At least, only in certain instances, when I dreaded something unpleasant — and was glad they didn't speak of it." She bent a little sidewise, watching the girls upon the beach. The red sunset light fell athwart one corner of the piazza; it flushed the east; there was a scudding of pink clouds overhead; the white sails, out at sea, caught and gave back the western glow in softened hue.

"This is just the point from which I saw Penelope the morning Marcia made me see what it amazes me beyond measure now to think I hadn't seen before," said Mrs. Stuart, in half soliloquy. "Look at them, Jerome. What a good time they are having! Hear Grace laugh, and Penelope, too. How sharply defined she seems, on that point of rock, so clear-cut against the sky. She has always been possessed to creep out to the very edge of the water. It used to worry me, but I've gotten above that fear. She has a different look, as

she stands there, from the rest of the girls, hasn't she?" turning her face to him.

"Fearless," he commented, "and an air of eager waiting and watching."

"That is it. I've never been able to think just what it is, but it is that eager waiting. I have observed it in her so many times — and that fearlessness. It seems to separate her from the rest. Sometimes, when I am watching them, I feel as though she were alone, when the girls are all around her, just as they are now. I suppose it is because she gets a little further out than the rest, and always stands with her face to the sea. I don't know that I have ever seen Penelope stand with her back to it."

Mr. Stuart, peering through the gaps in the leafy screen, said slowly, "Isn't it amazing that people can pass lightly over a wonderful work like this?"

"I suppose they really don't think much about that part of it," his wife answered, her eyes following the sudden flight of a bird. "I dare say," indulgently, "I should do the same thing myself. The *means*, I might question, but I should be genuinely glad of the result. I don't know why I should assume that they question the means,

though," with sudden reflection. "It is no proof they question it because they do not enter upon a discussion of the subject."

"Oh, no. But one looks for some reference to it in a case like this. Now Mrs. Selfridge —"

"I'm sure her note is as sweet as anything can be," his wife interrupted.

"It is sweet enough."

"I don't see why you use that tone. You've always liked her."

"I like her still," he said with a smile.

His wife looked at him doubtfully. "Men are so queer," she said, then abruptly changed the subject. "It has been very hot there, she says. I should think they would tire of the mountains. It seems to me I couldn't get through the summer without a glimpse of the sea."

"Selfridge was in town to-day, and called at the office. He told me to tell Penelope she will have a letter from Jack, but I forgot to mention it."

"Then they have written him," said Mrs. Stuart, with instant alertness.

"Selfridge said his wife gave him a hint, but from the way he threw back his head and laughed, I gathered the hint was a rather drawn-out story."

"Well — I don't mind now," Mrs. Stuart said,

after some consideration. "At least I don't mind as much as I did. Jack seems doomed to stand in my path; but he is not so objectionable as he was."

"He seems a fine fellow. Selfridge says he is."

"Oh, yes, he's a fine fellow — there was only one thing against him. You must be sure to tell Penny. She will be pleased enough. Jack is quite a hero with the girls."

"Selfridge is interested in Christian Science — that is easy enough to see. Jack's arguments carried weight. He says he has read the Bible more since Jack's last visit than in all his previous life put together. Christian Science turns one naturally to the Bible. Jack told him of instances he knew of where healing had followed the study of 'Science and Health.' But," with a sudden drop in his tone, "I fancy his wife is something of a clog upon him."

"Aren't you ashamed to speak in that way of that dear little woman? Why, he thinks the world of her!"

"She wouldn't act so powerfully as a drag, if he didn't," he returned imperturbably.

"Jerome Stuart! Do you suffer in the same way, I wonder?"

"Not consciously," he laughed.

"Still, there is no saying how early your wings *might* have sprouted!" insinuatingly.

Night was gathering on the water; the far-away sails had a spectral look. She watched them musingly for a minute. Then: "I am beginning to feel so at home with the change in Penelope," she said happily. "I wasn't at first. Now I forget to wonder over it every time I look at her. But it took days. I couldn't seem to believe it at times, even with my eyes resting on her. Had you any such feeling?"

"My experience was different. I was waiting for what came upon you unexpectedly," craning forward, as his eye caught the pale sheen of the young moon through the leaves. She followed his direction:—

"The sky is too yellow for it to show very clearly," she said, "but it is really quite a moon. To be sure it was! It came upon you gradually; you were prepared for it; while I —dear me! how blind I was—blinded by the certainty I felt that Penelope's fate was sealed. Do you know we are going to the city with you to-morrow?"

"You and Penelope?"

"Yes. I must get her dresses. I can't put it off another day. I meant to have taken her three weeks ago, that was my plan — but the letters! I positively couldn't get the time. We will go to-morrow, however, and get the dresses started; she needs them badly enough. Agnes's dresses have an odd look on her; they seem to label themselves as not being hers." The girls were coming up the plank walk from the beach, and she paused to listen to their voices. It was the only sound breaking the silence, save that ceaseless, measured rote of the ocean, that falling on the ear, day and night, seems to lull the heart, and to wear away the sharp edges of human strife and worry.

"I am glad I pursued exactly the course I did," she went on happily, a brooding light in her motherly face, as her eyes followed her daughters, "for now I am familiar with the change myself, and can't be upset by any of my old foolish fears every time anybody glances at us; and our friends are all familiar with the facts — which makes it comfortable, for I haven't continually to dread a surprise, and the possible necessity for an explanation."

It was unfortunate, however, that she expected anybody to be as much at home with the change

in Penelope as she was herself. It irritated her to see the studiedly veiled, and yet very obvious, curiosity in the faces of the few friends they chanced to meet in town the next day. It was difficult, indeed, to tolerate it; and when the little dressmaker, with a perplexed expression, turned her fair, delicate face upon her, and said hesitatingly, "Is—is this Miss Penelope?" she answered, with an incisiveness that precluded the possibility of further questioning:—

"Why, certainly. It can't be you have forgotten her!"

The quick flush that overspread Miss Shepard's pale face recalled Mrs. Stuart, and she added quickly, and in a kindlier tone: "It would be hardly surprising if you did not recognize her, though, she has grown so this summer. In fact," becoming suddenly communicative and confidential, "I presume every one will be more or less surprised. I have tried to prepare them. But we met the Lees this morning, and Mrs. Van Dyke Everett, and Frances Hastings, and I could see how astonished they were, in spite of what I had told them in my letters. It was more than they had looked for, I suppose. None of our friends have seen her since we went to Sweetbrier.

We are too out of the world, you know, for calls, and we have had no guests — except, of course, Mr. Parkhurst. Being Marcia's last summer with us, we thought we would keep it to ourselves. How are you getting on with her work — nicely, I am sure. I am glad of that. I thought I would ask you to put it aside for two or three days, if you can, and attend to Penelope."

Penelope, shy and smiling, watched Miss Shepard while her mother talked. She felt sorry for her when she flushed so painfully, and tried in every little considerate way she could think of to make amends for what had seemed unnecessarily sharp in her mother's tone and manner. She was ready with a quick smile each time she met her eyes, and looked at her with a pleased eagerness that seemed to say, "It is for you, as it is for all the world," when her mother said: —

"Perhaps you haven't heard of Christian Science?"

Miss Shepard was obliged to admit she had not heard of it.

"It is a new method of healing," Mrs. Stuart rejoined. "Or, no, not a new method, a rediscovered method. It is the method of Bible times." The tone was slightly perfunctory, and

realizing it, she caught with her teeth at her under lip and frowned.

"Oh," said little Miss Shepard, with a scared look in her gray eyes.

"I wish I hadn't mentioned it," thought Mrs. Stuart. "It sounded exactly as though I said it because I felt I ought — and I did. It's my New England conscience! It won't let me alone unless I tell all I know. I felt it would be better not to speak of it — now I know it!" She looked at Penelope.

"Christian Science shows us that God is Love," Penelope said with a sweet smile, and Miss Shepard looked lingeringly into her happy eyes. What changed eyes they were! Could it be this was the shrinking, burdened, deformed child whom she had seen no longer than March? She passed her worn, white hand over her eyes in a bewildered way. Jairus' daughter; the widow's son; the ten lepers; the woman whom "Satan had bound, lo, these eighteen years," flitted before her thought. "Our text-book, 'Science and Health, with Key to the Scriptures,'" Penelope was saying, "by Mrs. Eddy, points out this fact. It shows us that God is Love; and that man is made, as the Bible says

he is, in God's image and likeness. If this be true, we must be perfect — must we not?" It seemed so plain to her, but Miss Shepard's face did not express the words having any meaning for her whatever.

"If we are God's perfect children," Penelope added, going on from the point she had made, "we know we can't be sick, and deformed, and sorrowing; for we can't be two opposite things at the same time. We can't be both perfect and imperfect." Miss Shepard's face was irresponsive, and Penelope thought a moment.

"Christian Science has healed me," she said. "That proves the truth of what it teaches, doesn't it?"

Miss Shepard said "Yes," but in a wavering, uncertain fashion, as though she might with equal truthfulness have answered "No." The question was evidently an open one. Mrs. Stuart shook her head slightly at Penelope, to say no more, and Miss Shepard began mechanically taking measurements. She took the same measurements over and over, not apparently conscious that she was doing so, and forgot to put the numbers down, and was altogether quite unlike her usual self. Mrs. Stuart looked on

frowningly, telling herself she had "learned a lesson," and grumbling mentally over that infliction, a "New England conscience." But she kept a sharp watch upon the measurements, and made sure they were all properly taken in the end, and recorded with exactness.

Penelope did not speak after that signal from her mother, until they were going away. Then she said "Good-by," in so friendly a way, and with a smile so sweet and sympathetic and hopeful, she seemed to have said much more than these two simple words, and left Miss Shepard with that impression. It hung about her like a perfume, sweet and subtle, as she sat alone some minutes lost in thought. Then coming suddenly out of her revery, she gathered up the material which was to be fashioned into a dress for Penelope, and went into the cutting room.

"It seems like flying in the face of Providence," said Miss Shepard, looking down at the table on which she was leaning, with her fair brows drawn into a thoughtful frown, when she had finished the story of the change in Penelope.

Miss Haley's busy shears came to a halt. She was a tall, dark, angular woman, with snapping black eyes, and black hair.

"Why does it seem like flying in the face of Providence?" she demanded.

Miss Shepard looked up.

"There was nothing to suggest such a possibility," said she, tentatively.

"Oh," said Miss Haley, pursing up her lips, and making a sudden snip with the large shears at the cloth she was cutting.

"Well — we haven't — calculated on anything like it," Miss Shepard submitted.

The shears moved steadily on. "It is just possible Providence doesn't set any great store by our calculations," returned Miss Haley.

"Oh, I didn't mean that!" quickly. "But it seemed — now didn't it? — like a cross He had placed upon her —"

"And now it seems He has removed it," Miss Haley struck in.

Miss Shepard's small, fair face gathered that thoughtful frown again, as she said, "I have never known a cross like that to be removed, have you?"

"We don't hear of everything here in the workrooms. For my part, I'm glad!" said Miss Haley, with a snap in her voice which seemed to go hand in hand with the snap in her bright black eyes.

"Oh — *I*'m glad! She is a sweet girl. They are

all sweet girls, but she is the sweetest of the lot. I can't help feeling glad, even though it *does* seem — kind of wicked."

Miss Haley gave a scornful sniff. Then she laughed. "It would puzzle a phrenologist," said she, "to tell why you argue your way and I argue mine."

The pretty, delicate face lifted itself inquiringly, and Miss Haley explained: —

"You would naturally be expected to take the other side — that is all."

There was a moment's silence, then Miss Haley added: —

"You seem to feel evil has got the best of it, somehow, and snatched away a burden the good God meant to bind upon her."

"Oh, no, I don't!" gasped Miss Shepard. "Not that!"

"It sounded like it. What do you mean?"

"We-ell — I don't know — exactly. Only —"

There was a long pause. Miss Shepard softly stroked the material for Penelope's dress, which she had laid upon the table, as she looked at it in an unseeing way, and Miss Haley's sharp eyes watched her closely. At last Miss Haley said: —

"I'm not a professor — you know that! You

are a religious woman, and I am not, but I think of things sometimes. I seem to remember now that Jesus said *Satan* had bound a certain woman, and then without any fuss or argument, made her straight."

"But *that* was Jesus!"

"Yes, that was Jesus. I have never supposed, though, that Jesus did things contrary to God's will."

Miss Shepard caught her breath. "How dreadful to say such a thing!" said she.

"That depends on the point of view. It doesn't seem so dreadful to me as the other thing. But of course we couldn't think alike. I just wanted to show you, that in my way of thinking, there is no more authority for saying God lays these crosses, as you call them, on people now, than there was then — and I'm glad whenever anybody slips one. Which," said Miss Haley, beginning to cut with energy, "is all I have to say about it."

There was an interval, during which the only sound was the snipping and slashing of those long shears, that, to the uninitiated, might seem to be doing reckless work among the soft material of Marcia's travelling gown. Then Miss Shepard said in a perplexed, pondering way: —

"They mentioned Christian Science, but I don't understand what they mean by it."

The shears fell to the floor.

"You don't say so!" ejaculated Miss Haley, her face flushing crimson.

Miss Shepard, very much surprised, stared without a word.

"I want to know if *she* has been healed by *Christian Science!* Well, I never! That makes two!"

They looked at one another questioningly over the cutting table. Miss Haley added in a disappointed tone, "I've been waiting years to hear something more about Christian Science, and to think it was just the other side of the door, and I didn't know!"

She picked up her shears.

"Well," in her short, incisive way, "if it's as near as this, I needn't despair. Fall isn't far off —and if that little Miss Penny has been healed by Christian Science, she'll be willing and glad, I guess, to tell me what it is."

"How did you hear of it?" Miss Shepard asked with a face suddenly curious. "I never heard the words until this morning."

"I had a cousin cured of as good as blindness,

years ago; and she had a friend healed of about everything you can think of," Miss Haley answered, beginning to cut. "You needn't gasp — it's true! It does wonderful things. It does the works that Jesus did!"

"They said something like that! It sounded so wicked!"

"I should like to know why?"

"Do you mean you think human beings can do what Jesus did?" The fair face was full of indignation.

"I'll answer that question by asking another. Do *you* think he really meant what he said?"

"Of course I do!" the tone was shocked.

"He told his followers to do the works that he did."

"Yes — but — he didn't mean — well, they don't!"

"Christian Scientists *do*. I got that much from my cousin's letters, and I didn't get much more — beyond what Christian Science had done for her. But I've read my Bible a good deal since, and I don't find anything in it to contradict the practice."

"Are you sure about your cousin?" Miss Shepard ventured.

The black eyes bent themselves upon her. "Tolerably," she remarked coolly. Then, after a minute: "She was a teacher down East, and her sight gave out. Glasses didn't help much, but she struggled on, hardly able to see the words in the books or the figures on the blackboard, but in the end, of course, had to give it up. Then she went to Boston. She took care of an invalid or children — something like that — work not trying to the eyes, and went to one of the best oculists there. It took every cent she earned to pay him. He was kind; didn't make any charges; but she wanted to pay him something, so he said she could pay him whatever she felt able to, and she gave him all she earned — which wasn't much!" a sudden snip seemed to make this point emphatic. "But perhaps you do not care to hear?" with a whimsical glance. "It's about Christian Science."

"I don't want to leave her where she is," in a non-committal tone. "I would like to hear how she came out."

"She came out all right — though she was longer about it than she need have been had she known about Christian Science in the beginning. The oculist told her finally she must have an

operation; the result was doubtful; the good effect — provided there *was* a good effect — would last but a few years — and she was sure to be blind in the end. Poor Elsie! I guess the world seemed pretty dark to her those few days when she was making up her mind. But she decided to have the operation performed, and the time was set. It was only a few days before the date fixed upon that somebody said to her, 'Why don't you try Christian Science before undergoing the operation? It won't hurt you, and it may help.' The person who said it wasn't a Christian Scientist herself, but she knew of some cases it had healed, when other things had failed, and told Elsie about them. Afterward Elsie came to know the person I referred to, who had about everything a mortal can have, from dyspepsia up — or down. Elsie caught at the idea, as a drowning man catches at whatever comes in his way. She asked to have the operation postponed, and went to a Christian Science healer. She was *cured* in the *first treatment!*"

"Why-y!" said Miss Shepard. "Do you believe it?"

"I'm accustomed to believe her," Miss Haley returned calmly. "She's a Christian — a church

member in good and regular standing. Methodist, too," with a laughing glance across the table.

"What did the oculist say?"

"That it wouldn't last, I believe, or some such rubbish. That was — let me see — ten — *twelve* years ago, and she has never had a particle of trouble since. She was so — well, I guess *fearfully* delighted is about what I mean, when she found she was cured in that first treatment, she didn't dare say a word. Was afraid it would go back on her some way, I expect. So she kept on going for her treatments for a week. Then the lady asked her about her eyes — she hadn't mentioned 'em from the time Elsie told her what the trouble was until that morning — and of course Elsie owned up."

"It seems very wonderful," said Miss Shepard.

"It seemed wonderful enough to Elsie. She went right back to her school, and there ain't a happier woman in New Brunswick, I venture to say." She shook out the folds of the goods she was cutting, and laid it smoothly on the table. "I've been pining ever since to know something more of Christian Science, and now to think it's coming through that little Stuart girl!"

"This is her dress," Miss Shepard said pres-

ently, fingering the light material she had laid upon the table. "Pretty, isn't it?" Miss Haley looked at it as though she saw something besides the dress goods. "There is a light blue silk, and a beautiful shade of red cashmere to be made a little later. This, and three house dresses, Mrs. Stuart wishes as soon as possible."

"Isn't it a blessed religion," Miss Haley burst out fervently, making two or three unconscious snips in the air with her long shears, in the earnestness of her utterance, "that can lift the burden from the life of a child like Penny Stuart?"

Miss Shepard made no answer. The natural impulse to be glad for Penelope was pulled at and jerked into silence, so to speak, by the uncomfortable consideration that what had been done was not in accord with the teaching she had received. But apparently Miss Haley was not looking for an answer; at all events Miss Shepard's silence elicited no comment. Returning quite suddenly to her work, with her usual energy, she added, "I can hardly wait for September, to hear about it."

Could Penelope have known this, her look would have been less pensive, no doubt, as she

sat by her father's side after dinner that night, on the piazza at Sweetbrier cottage, thinking of Miss Shepard, wondering why it was she had failed to make her appreciate the truth and beauty of Christian Science.

Her eyes roved over the water. There were sinuous saffron streaks amid the opal tints; not a ripple stirred the surface; it was like a sea of glass, like a mirror, as widely unlike anything else, it seemed to her, as the heaving, white-capped, angry thing she had seen it become a few days previous, lashed by an east wind into fury, with a leaden sky hanging low. She thought of the "peace, be still," and of the Master's tread upon the billows. Something analogous between this and the change in her own heart was in her mind.

"Papa," she said suddenly, "I suppose there are people who are not interested in Christian Science when they hear of it, aren't there?"

"Have we had an experience?" returned her father, touching his knee, as an invitation to her to sit upon it.

"Mamma thought we made a mistake, perhaps, in mentioning it to Miss Shepard," she said, settling herself, and looking into his eyes, with

her face very near his own. "I wanted to tell her, so much — but possibly she hasn't any wants."

"Possibly she hasn't wakened to them."

She looked at him a minute. Then, "I know what you mean," she said. "She does seem polished."

He smiled suddenly. He would not have expressed it in this way, but she understood his meaning, he saw. "When she is ready for it, she will remember," he said.

"It isn't lost, is it?" with a slight shake of her head, as she stuck up his hair in Stella's fashion. "It's something like seeds, isn't it?"

"Yes," he answered musingly. "You mustn't expect too much in the way of immediate results. Wait. You wouldn't put a seed in the ground and expect it to spring up a flower the instant it is covered out of sight?"

"No. I wouldn't. But I've had experience with seeds," taking him by the chin to shake him playfully. "Perhaps I'll hear from this seed," she added as an afterthought. "Who knows?"

"You may. There are great surprises for us sometimes. None of us know exactly what we are doing."

Penelope thought of this, when on the day after their return to their town home, black-eyed Miss Haley called, with the humble request that she would tell her about Christian Science. "I've been counting the days," said she, "since Miss Shepard told me, when you were up in August, that you had been healed in Christian Science. I have wanted so long to know what it is," apologetically, "I thought you would be glad to tell me."

Penelope's face beamed. "Glad!" she said, with curious vibrations in her tone. "I wish I could give you an idea of one-half how delighted I am!"

But that was in September, and this August evening she was sitting on her father's knee at Sweetbrier cottage, with no knowledge even of the existence of black-eyed Miss Haley. The opal tints faded from the water, the sky paled, the young moon cast feeble shadows of tree and shrub. "Nothing is lost," said Mr. Stuart, breaking the long silence with this thought, as though he had been lingering in that vein of meditation all the while. "One tells another — the seed is sown — and so the work goes on. They have a church edifice in Boston, now."

"A new one?"

"They haven't had one until recently. This is the first. All the services have been held in halls, I think."

"Oh! Well, I'm glad! — I would love to see it."

"You haven't been in Boston, have you? Well, my tall girl must see Boston," looking at her as she shook her head. "I am in danger of having to look up to you, if you keep on, Penelope," he laughed.

"I grow like a weed, don't I? Grace says I grow like corn, in the night, and am a little taller each morning. Shall we really go to Boston?"

"We really shall. We'll go this fall. We will all go together," with sudden briskness, "and surprise Marcia, as soon as she is settled in her new home. That will be November, won't it?"

"Oh, how lovely! Is it a secret?"

"For the present. Who was off on Firefly to-night?"

"Stella. Marcia went with her. To-morrow it will be Agnes's turn — then mine. Marcia rode Tom this morning!"

"Whew! I prefer she would keep to Betty Gray."

"Marcia isn't afraid of any horse living," said

Penelope, kindling with the memory of the ride. "We had *such* fun. Firefly was *bound* to keep up. Marcia says I ride real well. And Firefly is a perfect dear! He's the greatest pet in the stable. Grace says Betty Gray's nose is out of joint, and she's dumpy with disgust. Shall *we* ride to-morrow morning? I'm always sure of the morning," gayly, "because nobody else gets up. We only go thirds at night."

"Shall I take Tom or Mark H?"

"Oh, Tom. He's *so* inspiring! I want you to see if I'm improving."

"Spencer confided to me that, in his opinion, you 'will soon be the best rider among the young ladies.' Speaking of Spencer, you commissioned me to look up a man called Jackson, not long ago."

She peered at him eagerly in the waning light. "And you've found him? Oh, good!"

"Oddly, too. It hadn't occurred to me to speak to Spencer. But to-night he asked me if I remembered Jackson Doubleday. He is back at Mr. Hathaway's."

"Are they at home?" with surprise.

"No — oh, no. But Mr. Hathaway hunted him up, before he went abroad, it seems, and he

has gone there quite recently, I think. It was news to Spencer, anyway."

"How beautifully things come out!" said Penelope, in a rapturous way.

"It hasn't come out very far," Mr. Stuart suggested.

"You mustn't throw cold water, papa! I see the whole thing just as plain! Didn't you say there is a cottage?"

"There used to be. A most picturesque little place. It must be in ruins now — seems to me Mr. Hathaway mentioned that he was having a new one built."

"Hannah likes new things."

Mr. Stuart laughed.

"You have taken things pretty well into your own hands, haven't you?" he asked.

"I'm so anxious, papa," she answered thoughtfully, "to have everything just as it would have been had I been like the rest. I don't think you can realize just how I feel about it. I want to blot out whatever points to the fact that I was once a burden — and Jackson's *aloneness* does. Hannah wouldn't have dreamed of staying with us for Grace's sake, or Agnes's, or any of the others — they didn't need her."

"No."

"Well, then, you see it is something that attaches to me, and so I must try and put it straight. Besides," after a minute's silence, "Jackson couldn't live in a new cottage alone."

"It would be solitary, wouldn't it? I really think, little woman, you are under obligation to find him a housekeeper."

"I really think I am," laughing. "What do you suppose Hannah will say when I speak to her?" putting a hand on his shoulder, and holding herself back stiffly as she waited for his answer.

"Can't imagine," shaking his head. "I will be audience, if you will permit it."

"I think it must be strictly private — but when?"

"Shall I bring him down here?"

"Oh, do!"

"To-morrow?"

"Oh, yes."

"Suppose he isn't willing to come?"

There was a little pause.

"Perhaps I had better not prepare Hannah until I am sure," she said.

## CHAPTER XII

### TO PENELOPE'S SATISFACTION

But Jackson was more than willing to come, it appeared, for when Penelope drove to the station next day to meet her father, there he was on the same train. "Didn't let the grass grow under his feet," Mr. Stuart whispered slyly, when the noise of the moving train and the bustle attendant upon the rearrangement of the trap for Jackson's accommodation in the back enabled him to do so without danger of being overheard by the person in question. "Telephoned him this morning, and there he was, young as twenty, waiting at the station when I came along. It has occurred to me, if you can't manage Hannah, what shall *I* do with Jackson?"

Penelope smiled; she was afraid Jackson might overhear, and made no answer. She watched him furtively, with a look of calculation on her face. Her father suspected she was speculating on Hannah's chances for happiness with this man.

Tall was Jackson, a little gaunt, black of eye, with hair that had once been like the raven's wing, but was sprinkled now with white, looking not quite so well, perhaps, in his carefully preserved, shiny black suit as he would in the Hathaway livery; but on the whole Penelope thought she liked him. There was a set to his large mouth and square jaw which she told her father, later on, "would make anybody know he would never give up Hannah."

He settled himself in due time in the space allotted him, and Tom — champing the bit impatiently, as his humble brothers (the old white horse, who ambled cheerfully to meet each lazy train, and now and then walked off with a prize; the ancient red horse, with retrospective gaze, and nothing to speak of in the way of tail, who came regularly from Prout's Corner to get the mail; a crony of his, all ribs and tail, with whom he touched noses at intervals in a sympathizing manner; and a few other kindred spirits) start out on their discouraged way before him — Tom, at the first intimation that he might go, swept off at his very best pace, while Jackson, who loved a horse, of course, bent a little for a surreptitious glimpse of him between Penelope and her father.

Mr. Stuart may have caught the action, for he said, with a note of pride in his voice of which he was quite unconscious, "My oldest daughter has been riding Tom. This is Tom!" with a flip of the reins, as intimating to Tom that he was being introduced. "Whoa, Tom! I recommended her keeping to Betty Gray."

"Understands horses," said Jackson, in a tone as nearly tentative as circumstances made permissible.

"Isn't afraid of them," with a laugh. "I didn't know," turning to Penelope, "but she might try Mark H."

"Papa!"

Mark H was conservative. He distinctly objected — and that, too, in a rampant manner that compelled respect to his views — to appearing in public, in any other fashion than side by side with his comrade Tom. This was the good old way, which he highly approved. As to a saddle, he would none of it. To ride Mark H was the great family dare. But Tom, though he stepped high and looked capable of independent action, was amenable to reason, and led a comfortable life of free handling and sugar, while Mark H neighed disapproval and stamped in the stable.

"Wide stretches of bayberry here," Mr. Stuart said presently, with a half-turn of his head in Jackson's direction. "Are you fond of the water?"

"Yes, sir. I was born in a seaport town. The sight of the ocean always carries me back to my boyhood. Bayberry, did you say, sir?"

"That is what we call it. With the gray of the rocks it is very effective."

"Edging the blue — yes, sir." Penelope said to herself that he had a nice voice. She began to feel quite certain she liked him. He looked around curiously. The Stuarts certainly had an out-of-the-way summer home. But it was wonderfully beautiful! More sea, as the road turned suddenly, a sea breaking into green and gray and purple, as it rolled restlessly, with sails everywhere. Blackened sails, tawny sails, sails white and glistening, patched sails, that had been rent by furious tempests. Goldenrod nodded by the roadside; in one place a mass of it pressed down to the beach. On the opposite side of the road was a scrubby little field, blue with gentians.

"That's a pretty sight," said Mr. Stuart, again to Jackson, indicating the blue field with a jerk of his whip. "It has been a delight to me for weeks.

But pick them — and they're gone. Worth nothing except as they stand."

Jackson's gaze swept upward from the little field to the deeply blue sky. "It might almost have dripped and crystallized on those ragged stalks," he muttered, as though he were thinking aloud.

Mr. Stuart and Penelope turned, their faces confronting one another. There was a surprised look in both pairs of eyes. Jackson was looking at the little blue field. Penelope made up her mind, fully and finally, that she liked him. It became of greater moment that Hannah should be properly managed. She was a little sober over the responsibility; it seemed more of an undertaking as the time for action neared. Then she said to herself that there were no difficulties in the way of right-doing, that a right action involved neither uncertainty nor failure, and that she wouldn't listen for another instant to the suggestion that it could. She looked up smilingly, when her father said: —

"How are they getting on with the cottage, Jackson?"

"Well, sir. It is nearly completed."

"You say John and his wife are there?"

"Yes, sir. I am living with them. I went there the 1st of August, sir."

"John," Mr. Stuart said, in explanation to Penelope, "was Mr. Hathaway's gardener when I was a young fellow. He has been there ever since; took care of the place those years when Mr. and Mrs. Hathaway were abroad, and looks after it still, in a way; though," with a slight turn of his head toward Jackson, "I suppose he does very little now."

"Very little, sir. Joe really has the place." Joe was John's son. "John and his wife will go to live with Joe when Mr. and Mrs. Hathaway return," added Jackson.

"Which," said Mr. Stuart to Penelope, "will be the 7th of September."

"Oh," she said softly, "how glad I am! That will be soon, won't it? I shall be so glad to see them."

"We shall all be pleased to see them," returned her father.

Another turn of the road — that turn around which Mrs. Stuart had watched Penelope disappear on that day when she drove alone for the first time to meet her father — and the house that sheltered Hannah loomed before Jackson's vision, and set his heart thumping with such violence it seemed to choke him. He wondered did she suspect he

might be coming; and, as though answering the thought, Penelope turned around in her seat, and said (anxious to spare him disappointment), "Hannah doesn't expect you, Jackson."

Jackson's face grew dark crimson, and he shuffled with his feet. Mr. Stuart presented the back of his head to his daughter and scanned the sky. Penelope, instantly aware that Jackson was ill at ease, cast about hurriedly for something to say that might restore him his composure. "Do you remember Penelope?" she asked. "You have heard of Penelope?"

There was no doubt but that he had heard of Penelope. His lips closed grimly, unconsciously to himself.

"I'm Penelope," she said sweetly, and Jackson jerked up his head. He was not prepared for this. Mr. Stuart turned his face toward her again, in lieu of his fine gray hair. "I have been healed by Christian Science," she added gratefully.

A look of understanding came into Jackson's black eyes. He knew something of Christian Science, knew at least what a transformation it had wrought in the Hathaways and their home. He said nothing for a minute or two. Then: "Is

—is Hannah interested in Christian Science?" he faltered.

"She is reading 'Science and Health,'" Penelope answered quickly. This was a great joy to her, and she managed, unconsciously to herself, to convey the fact in her tone.

Jackson appeared to take heart of hope, for he straightened up properly, and brought his feet to order. They dropped him at the stable; and Penelope, running up to her room for her work-basket, went with it into Hannah's room, where Hannah was sitting, sewing.

There was a pleasant flutter of muslin curtains at the windows and a view of blue sea between the ruffles. There were few windows in the cottage from which a view of the sea was not obtainable. Penelope sat down at the window with Hannah, facing her, and, putting her feet upon the footstool Hannah invitingly pushed a little toward her, took a half-finished handkerchief from her basket, and began to sew. Penelope was always making handkerchiefs; there was never a time when one of these dainty articles was not tucked away in that same neat work-basket waiting for moments like this. Hannah smiled upon her indulgently. She was the light

of Hannah's eyes, and Penelope, meeting the smile, smiled back. Her position, as regarded Hannah and the footstool, was the same as it had been from the time she was old enough to be trusted with a very big needle — in which the thread was tied, because of a disappointing tendency of needles, in those days, to come unthreaded — and sew doll's clothes. But now she sat in a chair like the one in which Hannah was sitting, the little low chair she had used so many years being relegated to the corner. Jackson was very much in her mind as she sat there, close to the fluttering curtain, but she could not think just how to introduce him.

"There are lots of gulls, aren't there?" she said presently, glancing out between the ruffles. "Are you fond of gulls, Hannah?"

"I'm not partial to 'em," Hannah answered, biting off her thread, and giving the buttonhole she had finished a twist and a pull, and then pressing it between her thumb and forefinger. "Is it the gulls makes your cheeks so red?" squinting at the buttonhole to make sure it was perfect.

Penelope glanced up suspiciously. What if Hannah knew of Jackson's coming? "Are they red?" she said. "I have been driving."

"Where have you been driving?" with her eyes on the scissors, as she cut a fresh buttonhole.

"Didn't you see me, coming or going?"

"No."

"Nor hear me?"

"No," measuring a needleful of thread from the spool, and biting it off. "I know," with a laugh, meeting Penelope's reproving glance, "bite, bite, bite. But I haven't time for scissors — takes too long! My teeth are good for some time yet," bringing them together with a snap, in proof of her point, "notwithstanding I've been biting threads more years than you have numbered. Where did you say you've been?"

"I didn't say! But I went to the station for papa."

"The land o' goodness! You don't mean to say it's that late?" narrowing her eyes at the little clock on the mantle. "If there's a thing in the universe fitted to wings, it's *time* — and uses 'em too."

"I thought you might have seen me."

"Didn't see — didn't hear! Take me for a mole and a bat?" laughed Hannah. "I'm sorry. I admire to see you drive, dearie. I never lose a chance at that sight — not if I know it, I don't."

"It must be very hard to live alone, mustn't it, Hannah?" after an interval of silence.

"Not having tried it, I can't say. Some folks seem to like it."

"Who, Hannah?" setting little stitches in the handkerchief.

"Why — those who do it. And," grimly, "if they enjoy being a sort of Simon Stylite — why, let 'em enjoy themselves in their own way, I say."

"Perhaps they are obliged to live alone."

"Let's hope they are, and that they ain't geese enough to do it unless they do have to," said Hannah, making buttonholes in a jerky fashion.

Penelope thought she would try another method, that she could perhaps reach her point more directly by another road.

"I'm growing fast, am I not, Hannah?" she asked beamingly.

"What's this look like?" shaking out the skirt upon which she was working, and holding it up for inspection. "Seems that way, don't it? But grow, grow, grow! Don't ever you stop on my account. You can't grow too much to suit me. I've got an amazing appetite in that line," said Hannah, returning to the buttonhole. "I'll make

a new skirt every week and let down all the old ones, cheerful as the blue."

This was Hannah's pet expression. If a thing pleased her, it was "cheerful as the blue," "bright as the blue," "happy as the blue." It was generally conceded by the family that the reference was to the sky, though no one was possessed of definite authority for this supposition.

"I don't need as much help as I used to," Penelope said, feeling guilty. "I am not so dependent."

"Land," returned the unconscious Hannah, "you was never any trouble. You've always been the helpfullest little thing."

"But now I can take care of myself."

Hannah looked up, with sudden calculation in her face. There was something in Penelope's tone she did not understand.

"I ain't counting on your growing away from me," she said.

"But then, you see, Hannah, I can't always need to be taken care of. I must do as the other girls do — you see that, don't you?"

"No, I don't," Hannah answered. She had a suspicious look. She divined that Penelope had an object in saying this. A dubiousness, like a

cloud, settled over her, Penelope was sorry for Hannah, but she thought of Jackson, and added remorselessly: —

"I don't even need you now, Hannah. I love to have you near me — but you are no longer necessary. Look what a big girl I am, Hannah! and I shall grow away from you more and more. You are glad, I know," with a bright smile, "because it means my life is as it ought to be. You are too unselfish, dear, good Hannah, not to wish me a free, happy life, even though it breaks up our old relationship. But," reaching out her hand and laying it upon Hannah's, limp now upon her lap, "breaking that outward relationship can never change my feeling to you, nor your feeling to me. We shall always be friends, and I love you more this minute, if possible, than I ever have in my life; though I say — and I mean it, Hannah! that you are no longer necessary to my comfort — and I can get along alone."

Hannah sat mute and motionless, with a dumb sort of entreaty in her eyes.

"I must go," Penelope said hurriedly, looking at her watch. "Will you please, Hannah, go to the library at half-past five? — it lacks but three minutes to that time now."

"Why, what'll I go to the library for?" Hannah said, her lips looking stiff, as though it were difficult to move them.

"Papa knows you are coming — at least he expects you," Penelope said. Then she stooped suddenly and kissed her. "You needn't be frightened," she said. "You will find it's not so dreadful. But I want you to be sure and remember *I do not need you.* Half-past five, Hannah, you know," glancing back from the door.

When she heard Hannah go slowly and heavily along the hall to the back stairs, Penelope — who was only halfway down the front stairs, just out of sight — stole back again and entered her own room. It was all over, as far as she was concerned, she felt, and smiled happily. "Poor Hannah!" she thought. "But I'll make it up to her when she comes back. It certainly did sound severe, though it had to be." She sat down by her favorite window, but hardly had she done so when a door closed with a bang, and there was a confused and hurried getting up the back stairs.

Penelope ran to the door, and a moment later Hannah appeared, running, her apron caught up in one hand and both hands pressed over her ears. Seeing Penelope, she changed her course

slightly and dropped down upon a chair just within the door of Penelope's room, and, throwing her apron over her head, began to laugh.

Penelope looked at her with amazement. She did not feel like laughing herself; she was more nearly displeased with Hannah than she had ever been in her life before. Presently Hannah pulled the apron down a little way, so that one eye was visible, and demanded: —

"Did you know that goose was in the library?"

Penelope made no reply; and Hannah, hiding the inquisitive eye, laughed afresh. But the paroxysm was shorter.

"I'm ashamed of you, Hannah," Penelope said, with reproof in every intonation of her voice.

"I'm ashamed of myself," rejoined Hannah, the eye again emerging. "But it isn't my fault. I'm not to blame. I wouldn't put a goose in the library and run an unsuspecting victim in upon him; and if anybody says I would, I deny it. I'd deny the allegation, and whip the alligator," with a fresh burst.

This last was a quotation from Spencer, and may even have had some other origin than that of his fertile brain. She looked at Penelope sheepishly, half expecting a laugh, yet vaguely aware of her dis-

pleasure. But Penelope found nothing humorous in this sally, and her continued silence acted as a damper, perhaps, upon Hannah's mirthful mood, for she gradually ceased laughing, and finally dropped the apron altogether.

There was a look in her face new to Penelope She thought suddenly she was almost pretty. In spite of what she called her "green eyes and snuff-colored hair" and the freckles, Hannah had been a pretty girl. She was by no means an ill-looking woman; and as she sat there, half-defiant, ready to burst into laughter at any moment, with that new, inscrutable look in her face, Penelope thought she was very nearly a pretty one. She thought she would appeal to her kindly sympathies.

"Think of his gray hair, Hannah," she said insinuatingly.

"Pooh! Why should I think of his gray hair? I ain't partial to gray hair! I didn't ask him to have gray hair! What'd he go and live alone for? Just his stubbornness. I told him one Hannah didn't make the world. Goodness, I guess not! There's plenty of 'em — Hannahs and Nancys and Betseys and Janes — the name don't signify! But why don't you say *my* gray hair?"

"Yours doesn't show much."

"That's my sense! Why didn't he get a good-wearing color? Nothing shows dust like black."

"I think his hair is nice."

A sparkle came into Hannah's eyes. "You should have seen it when I first knew him!" she said. "That black, it had blue lights in it! I always think of it when I see them blackbirds that show bluish when the sun strikes 'em."

"It is pretty now, I think — and so thick."

"Yes. He hasn't gone bald! Forgot it, I suppose," with a laugh.

"Hannah, how *can* you!"

"I don't know how I can. But it comes easy." She eyed Penelope for a moment, then: "Goodness!" she cried, "look at me! I'll have to make up for this scandalous waste of time," and without further ado flung herself out of the room and, shutting the door of her own room hastily, locked it behind her with a snap.

Penelope stood in her own doorway, and looked diagonally across the hall at that other door, with indecision in face and manner. She was unwilling to leave the matter where it rested, yet what could she do? Would it be wiser to go away, she wondered, and leave the affair to work itself out; or should she knock at that door and insist that

Hannah be more reasonable? A low, smothered sound made its way faintly to where she stood, and decided her course for her. She did not know if it were the sound of stifled laughter or weeping; but, whichever it be, the sound was not intended for her ears, and she turned hastily and walked away.

She was thinking of this frustration of her plans, with a feeling of disappointment, a certain sense of failure, as she stood with her father and mother on the western piazza — the piazza ran entirely around Sweetbrier cottage — to see the sun go down. She had anxiously scrutinized her father's face at dinner, but it was thoroughly non-committal. His part in the plot had been to mount guard over the library while Jackson Doubleday was there. What had happened after Hannah's sudden flight, she had no idea. Her sympathies were with Jackson. She was sorry for Hannah, if it were true that she was crying; but there were contradictions she could not harmonize with this proposition. The affair might have been managed better, she felt. If only they could do something to straighten it out! Her eyes constantly sought her father's, but there was neither encouragement nor enlightenment in

them when she chanced to meet them, and his manner was distraught.

Mrs. Stuart walked away to a little distance, peering over the balustrade at intervals of her slow progress upon the geraniums in generous blossom, close against the house; and Penelope, taking advantage of this, said in an undertone:—

"Did you hear Hannah, papa, when she ran away?"

"Yes," he nodded, "and saw her too."

They looked helplessly at one another. Then suddenly Mrs. Stuart said, without turning to them:—

"Why, who is that with Hannah?"

Some one with Hannah! They started forward eagerly, following the direction of her gaze. Sure enough! The entire expression of their faces changed.

"Oh-h!" said Penelope, with relief in the sound. The glare of the sun, at which she had been looking, had gotten into her eyes, and little red suns appeared to light upon and hover about Hannah and Jackson as she looked at them. "Oh, good!" she cried, and clapped her hands.

Mr. Stuart looked quite prepared to clap his

own hands, but refrained, for his wife's mystified eyes were upon him.

"I haven't had an opportunity to tell you, Flora," he said, half apologetically. "Under the circumstances — not feeling quite sure how it was going to turn out, I thought it best not to mention the subject before the girls. On Hannah's account, you know. But Jackson is here. That is Jackson."

"Jackson," murmured his wife. The name conveyed no meaning to her. "Who is Jackson?" she asked.

"Long ago, one of Mr. Hathaway's coachmen."

"Oh! That fellow — who used to hang around Hannah? He was the terror of my life! I expected nothing but she would marry him."

Mr. Stuart glanced at Penelope, but she was watching the two figures winding, side by side, amid the bayberry, and his eyes travelled on in the same direction. They watched them in silence. The ground was gradually rising; at the crest it was sufficiently high to obscure the view of the wide pebbly beach and the blue waters of the bight. The scrubby growth and rocks that crowned the summit showed in a ragged fashion against the sky.

"But what is he here for?" Mrs. Stuart asked abruptly, with dismay in her voice.

"I — I think on the same old errand," passing his hand down over his mouth and chin, and glancing at Penelope again, out of the tail of his eye.

"You don't mean it! Jerome Stuart," as she intercepted a glance intended for Penelope, "what have you been doing?"

"It's Penelope," he declared, bursting with laughter. He was elated by the sight of the calm couple amid the bayberry, and felt himself suddenly light as a feather. A certain vision of Jackson Doubleday, as he had last seen him, sitting white and stiff in the harness room with a grim look on his strong face, had haunted him. There was something in this new view of him, under these changed conditions, that touched him to laughter. Penelope laughed too.

"I don't see what you find in it so very funny," said Mrs. Stuart. "It doesn't seem in the least funny to me!"

"It is the relief," explained Penelope, wiping her eyes. "I didn't know what had become of Jackson; and I thought poor Hannah was locked up in her room, and here —" with a wave of her

hand towards the unconscious pair, as a finish to her sentence.

"And I didn't know what had become of Hannah," Mr. Stuart chimed in, "and I thought poor Jackson was still in the harness room, and here — " with a wave of his hand in the same direction.

"Jerome, you are like a child! You are as bad as Penny! But what has Hannah been up to?" with a quick change in her tone, and a look of displeasure on her face.

"Nothing, mamma," Penelope answered, with instant seriousness. "She didn't know a thing about it, till she found him in the library!"

"In the library! Who put him in the library?"

"I," said Mr. Stuart. "I put him in the library." Then in sing-song fashion, "Ding-dong bell — who's in the well?" and he and Penelope went off in fits of laughter.

"You make yourselves very merry, but what there is to laugh at is more than I can see. I think you are silly!"

"But little Johnny Green had to take him out again, mamma! You would think it is funny if you had been through it — I think it is!"

"It may be — I'm sure I hope it is. But the

humor is too excruciatingly fine for my perception. I feel cross — I feel vexed. At her time of life too! She is thirty-eight or forty, if she's a day."

"She isn't so old as Jackson!"

"Of course, you would see it from his point of view! I shouldn't expect anything else. It vexes me! There was no reason for such interference. Hannah was contented!"

"Jackson wasn't."

"I should say he could look out for himself — he's a man. But I can't believe it!" Then incredulously, "Do you really think she is going?"

"She seems to be," with a twirl of his thumb in the direction of the two figures walking away toward the sunset.

"Going," said Mrs. Stuart, in a short, quick utterance this time, as though Hannah were up at auction, and she were the auctioneer, "going — going!" The two figures paused for a moment on the ridge, outlined sharply against the gold and crimson of the west, then, descending on the opposite side, were gradually lost to view. "Gone," said Mrs. Stuart, as the heads disappeared — and the hammer fell. "I have been trying to realize it," she went on dubiously,

"but I can't. What shall I do without Hannah? No one can take Hannah's place!"

"Oh, don't say that, mamma! I am sure you will find somebody. Doing right can never bring loss to any one — and I am sure it was right to do this."

"Right? I don't see that it was a question of right! Hannah has a good home, and is happy with us."

"Hannah has given a good many years of her life to Penelope," Mr. Stuart said quietly.

"Why — yes," she responded; "I've always known it was on Penelope's account she remained. At least, I have always suspected she would have married Jackson Doubleday, after she got her mother's place paid for, but for Penelope."

"And Penelope needs her no longer."

"No-o. I suppose you mean I do not. I don't know that I do — really. Only I'm so used to her. Delia can work into her place, I suppose. She has been with us ten years, and ought to understand something of our ways. But that necessitates a new maid in Delia's place. Why," with sudden brightness, "there is a little Hannah coming up from Nova Scotia this fall. I can take her. It had slipped my mind, but Hannah

told me she had a niece coming, several weeks ago."

"Another Hannah?" cried Penelope, her bright eyes dancing. "How lovely! Do you suppose she will look like dear, old Hannah?"

"Take care," warned her father.

"I only call her old because I love her so much. It's a dear adjective to me — it seems to imply a long, tender relationship. I hope she will look like Hannah."

"I dare say she will," rejoined her mother. "They all look alike — the uncles and the cousins and the aunts. Jane Cummings looks enough like Hannah to be her sister. I believe," with sudden calculation in her tone, "I'll have Hannah write her niece to come at once; then she can teach her about the work, and perhaps get her well broken in before she is married. We must give Hannah a wedding."

"Oh, lovely!" said Penelope, in a little ecstatic burst.

"How would you like to furnish her house for her?" inquired her father. The look on Penelope's face was sufficient answer. "It will be at least an acknowledgment of what we owe her," he added. "We can never pay the debt — she has been faithful to our interests many a year."

"Yes, indeed. I don't believe there is anybody else in the world who could have been to Penelope just what Hannah has."

"There's a new cottage at Mr. Hathaway's, mamma. You know Hannah likes new things — won't it be great, getting it ready for her?"

"Yes, it will," with surprising enthusiasm. "She deserves it, too. She has been a good friend to us," with a lingering look at Penelope. "I'm sure I don't know what I should have done without her. And Jackson! The harness room, too! Under the circumstances it's simply shocking."

"No trouble with the harness room — it's his own vine and fig tree. The library was something of a trial," observed Mr. Stuart.

"Poor fellow! My antagonism has gone like the dew, you think? Well, it has. I don't know where, and it doesn't matter how — it's gone. I must make some preparation for him," considering. "The room Jane Cummings occupies when she visits Hannah — I'll put him there. It hasn't been used this season, and I must have Delia freshen it up a bit. Dear me!" with a laugh as she bustled away, "I'm as excited as the girls will be — and what they'll do when they hear the news is difficult to guess."

There was a whimsical look on Mr. Stuart's face as his eyes followed his wife out of sight. As they travelled back, they encountered Penelope's, and a smile flitted simultaneously over the face of each.

"A good ending to his chapter," he commented, sitting down with Penelope beside him. "'All is well that ends well,' they say. Things looked a little dubious for a time, but the cloud has lifted."

"Yes, indeed! And I'm so happy. Everything has come out to my entire satisfaction — even to the new little Hannah."

They were silent for a long time; a star made itself visible in the pale yellow sky; the girls trooped up the plank walk, and drifted to the other side of the house, the favorite spot on moonlight evenings. Their voices came stealing now and then toward Penelope and her father, with little bursts of laughter, mingling with that other music, the steady, monotonous rush and murmur of the sea.

"Papa," she said suddenly.

He started, and she wondered where he had been wandering, and from what she had called him back, but she did not ask. "Do you know what I would like?" she said instead.

"I am always delighted to hear!"

"To go to college," she whispered.

"Whew!" Then, after a minute: "There is no reason that I know of why you should not go if you wish to. But what shall I do without my big girl?"

"You have so many big girls," nestling closer to him. "Besides, it won't be for very long — and think of the vacations! It is my great ambition. It is next to the great wish of my heart."

"And that?"

"That you know, papa," slipping a hand through his arm, and laying her head against his shoulder, after a fashion she had. "The strongest desire I have, or can ever have, is to carry the light of Christian Science to those who are longing for it. But I needn't go out of my way to do that, need I?"

"No."

"There are always people waiting to be made free, aren't there, papa?"

"Yes."

"Sometimes I wonder are there any waiting along the path I am to go, waiting for me to pass by — not consciously, of course! but waiting, all the same. I hope I may never fail to see any one

who is. Do you think it at all likely there are those waiting to whom I am to show the way?"

But he forgot to answer.

"I want to help the burdened and suffering," she went on, not noticing the omission. "Do you remember once saying that our lives must attest our gratitude?" Then, as he nodded, "I wish *mine* to. Words are inadequate."

There was inexpressible tenderness in the touch of his fingers upon Penelope's cheek. He could not see her face (a sweet, bright, girlish face it was now), but he knew its every line, and curve, and color. "I love to think of the joy that comes to dear Mrs. Eddy from the knowledge that she has shown so many the way to freedom," she said musingly, after a minute's silence.

Freedom! His thoughts flew backward. Ah, how far apart from them that old bondage seemed! It had nothing to do with Penelope now, nothing, and his heart swelled with loving gratitude to God, and to her whose goodness, purity, devotion, courage, had won for this age the light of Christian Science; who had again shown to mortals the new-old meaning of the text that suddenly sounded with the distinctness of a voice in his ears: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE LAWN PARTY

FOUR years slipped away. Penelope was eighteen, and Penelope was going to college. The lawn party was on the eve of her departure, given for her by Mrs. Hathaway, at Weehaukn. Love Hathaway was there; she had been visiting her grandparents, but was going away with Penelope on the morrow. It was Love's last year at college, while Penelope, a-tiptoe with expectancy, was on the verge of that mystic experience.

"I don't know what I shall do without her," Mrs. Stuart had been wailing for months. She had had all her daughters with her this summer at Sweetbrier cottage: Mrs. Marcia Parkhurst of Boston, and Mrs. Helen Van Ness of New York, in addition to the four nestlings who had not yet left the shelter of the mother wing. But in December Grace was to become Mrs. Jack Prescott, and here was Penelope going to college! Truly, the old nest was thinning fast.

"Perfectly dreadful!" groaned Mrs. Stuart. "Only Agnes and Stella left!"

"I haven't gone yet," laughed Penelope. This was in August. "And you know, mamma, you don't really have to cross a bridge till you come to it."

"That is small consolation! You are going — and then Grace."

"There'll be an interval," remarked that young lady, lifting her sunny head from the sewing, which of late had usurped the place of the still-loved sketch-book. "And, as Penelope says, there are the vacations."

"And in December we shall all be home again," added Marcia, consolingly.

"It's great, having so much visiting to do," Stella said, with enthusiasm. "I like that part of it! I am quite familiar with New York and Boston. I wish Grace was going to live in Washington — then I'd have three cities. 'Twould be lots more fun."

"Well — Stella," said her mother, with a lift of her eyebrows, and a distinct pause between the two words, "why didn't you mention your preference a little earlier? But," with one of her quick changes of tone and manner, "Boston is far

enough — don't wish for Grace to go any farther. Though, to be sure, Boston doesn't seem quite so entirely out of the world as it once did. Heigh-ho!" with a sigh. "Still," brightening as she usually did, without the least intimation of her intention, "we don't have to cross a bridge till we come to it, as Penelope says. So we'll have a good time while the sun shines, and not think of those two dark months till they compel us to. My!" trailing off unexpectedly into her former doleful tone, "it makes me shiver to think that September is even now peeping over my shoulder."

Without respect to Mrs. Stuart's shivers, her taste or distaste, September arrived, and having added day to day, had brought the eve of Penelope's first long absence from home.

"That is very true," Mrs. Stuart responded to Mrs. Damon's enumeration of certain alleviating circumstances attendant upon the coming separation, "and we do adjust ourselves to changed conditions much more readily than seems possible when they loom before us as probabilities. Still — Penelope is everything to me. I don't see how I'm to get along without her."

"You said the same of Marcia."

"I know I did. And then of Helen, and now,"

laughing, "of Grace and Penelope. It means, I suppose, that each is individually dear, and one cannot take the other's place." Mrs. Damon assented, and the two mothers beamed for a minute into one another's faces. "What an ideal place for an out-of-door party!" said Mrs. Stuart, with a glance about.

"So I was thinking. How the sombre shadows down there by the pond are lighted up by that bevy of laughing girls!"

"They have need to be lightened. I've neither taste nor space for evergreens. There would be none about our home if mine were the only taste to be consulted. Why? Oh-h — because they're so doleful. They always give me a homesick feeling. There is Hannah crossing the lawn. How she improves! She doesn't look an hour older than the day she was married. Jerome says she grows young. I've just been over to her cottage — it's the sweetest little home! Our Hannah is here, too — Penelope thought she would enjoy looking on. She is assisting just now in the house, I think," turning her head slowly around, as seeking a possible contradiction to this proposition.

"Penelope thinks of everybody," said Mrs. Damon.

Mrs. Stuart nodded a quick assent, but a shadow stole over her face. The shadow was distinctly different in character, however, from that old cloud, for whose coming Penelope used to watch so shrinkingly. This meant the oft-repeated heart-query, "What shall I do without her?" in lieu of the pain which, in that all-but-forgotten past, shadowed her handsome face whenever she spoke of or looked upon her "fourth little daughter, Penelope."

"It is remarkable," she said, after a pause, "that a girl of her age can exert so strong an influence. But she is so earnest and trustful — and never so happy as when telling some one of Christian Science."

Mrs. Damon thought of the little deformed girl she used to watch with so much pity. "She has proved its power," she said, and added: "Many of us have. There is more than one here whose gratitude is far too deep for words."

Had Dick been near he would have added an eager affirmation; for Penelope had stood by him with unflinching faith in God's love and power and willingness to heal and save, when means material had failed; and the boy, strong and happy

now, was never backward in saying what Christian Science had done for him.

The light of that healing was in the mother's face, as she looked across the lawn to where Penelope was standing with a circle of her friends. She had never found words in which suitably to clothe her gratitude; but the soft shining of it was always in her eyes whenever they rested upon Penelope. Mrs. Stuart glanced at her once or twice, then she broke the silence.

"Yes," she said, "there are many. And the growth is wonderful. I can hardly believe it myself, sometimes; but when Penelope was healed, four years ago, Christian Science was almost unheard of — here, and now look! People, too, whom you wouldn't have expected would give the subject a thought — the Lees and Everetts and Halls and Emerys and Richardsons — Frances Hastings was first to inquire into it. No, I'm wrong — the first was Miss Haley. People, you know, who do not seem to need it — that is what surprises me. It's a different thing when it comes to the sick and suffering! we naturally look for them to turn to it, after seeing what it has done for Penelope — people

like Mrs. Van Dyke Everett, and the Whitneys, and your sister. But I don't know that they are a whit more enthusiastic and earnest than those I first mentioned."

"Each heart knoweth its own need," Mrs. Damon said, with that beautiful light in her good face. It was never surprising to her that people were interested in Christian Science. The surprise came rather when she found those who were not.

"Dick said there was a stranger at the service last Sunday, with Miss Haley, and from his description I concluded it was Miss Shepard," she remarked.

"Yes. Penelope was overjoyed. Miss Shepard was the first person outside the family to whom she mentioned Christian Science — I believe I introduced the subject then, but she talked about it, and tried to explain how she had been healed. I remember we were both quite blue over the result — for the time, at least. Penelope soon recovered, and has had an eye of interest on Miss Shepard ever since. But she has never spoken to her on the subject, to my knowledge — really, there was no need, for, as Penelope said, she knew what Christian Science

had done for her, and when she was ready for it, she knew where to turn. Then she had Miss Haley!"

"That says so much, doesn't it?"

"Miss Haley is certainly a force. It was almost amusing, in those early days, to see that black-eyed woman at Penelope's feet. She was so eager, and Penelope so willing to teach. I have smiled many a time over a glimpse of them — Penelope seemed such a child. But I was glad to see Miss Shepard at the service — it has all come out right, as Penelope said it would."

"Things always come out right when we trust God," said Mrs. Damon, gently.

There was a silence. Then Mrs. Stuart remarked in an indulgent tone, with a kindly smile on her face, as her head turned slowly from left to right: "This is a real Penny-party, as we call them. There is Mr. and Mrs. Nye. The old and the young, the rich and the poor, Penelope is no respecter of persons."

"Penelope's parties are always enjoyable. I noticed," with a smile, "that this has the Penny-stamp. Sally said the other day, she thinks it is a question which Mrs. Hathaway loves the most — Penelope or Love."

"Really, I think she knows little difference! Certainly there is a very close bond between Mrs. Hathaway and Penelope. I'm almost inclined to be jealous at times!" with a light laugh that robbed the declaration of all affirmative force. "It gives Jerome a great deal of pleasure. He has always been fond of Mrs. Hathaway — so am I."

"There is old Mrs. Turnover," said Mrs. Damon, with an indefinite motion of her head in the direction of the house, and Mrs. Stuart, screwing around a little on the settee, turned her face that way.

"How spry she is!" she commented in an admiring tone. "She is a monument certainly to what can be achieved! Who but Penelope would have dreamed of setting up a person of her age in business, though?" Both women laughed pleasantly; and Mrs. Stuart added, "She doesn't seem old — now! as Penelope says, 'she's only seventy — and seventy is nothing.'"

They laughed again in that light, good-natured, happy fashion.

"Penelope has done marvels for the poor people in this town," Mrs. Damon said thoughtfully, after a little silence. "I shall never forget

the surprise it was, the first time I heard her say, 'It is as wrong to be poor as it is to be sick.'"

"It's her creed! and she certainly brings out wonderful results. And always so bright about it too! It seems to me, when she was laying the foundation for Mrs. Turnover's candy business, we laughed day in and day out. Always running about with a spoon in one hand and a bundle of receipts in the other, seeking some one to sample her wares. But with all her fun, she was thoroughly in earnest; and as fast as she mastered the mysteries she imparted them to Mrs. Turnover. I think she must have been an apt pupil! certainly she makes delicious candy—and clean! Why you could eat off her floor!"

"Sally is always singing her praises. I think Sally is a very good customer," smiling.

"There is no dearth of customers, I believe. I shall never forget Penelope's excitement when they sold the first pound! Mrs. Selfridge sent down to know if they had manufactured anything for which she could exchange a quarter; but," with a laugh, "they advanced the price with the sale of the second pound. Penelope's business ability is the delight of Jerome's heart. He furnished the capital—it didn't require much—a

few pounds of sugar and a stewpan! and Mrs. Turnover's first act was to repay him. I don't know," meditatively, "if it were at Penelope's suggestion or no."

"It wouldn't be strange if she needed a reminder, she had lived on charity so long," Mrs. Damon commented. "But Penelope has shown her a better way; she is so self-respecting now. Then the granddaughter!" with a sidewise motion of the head, that expressed so much.

Mrs. Stuart's gaze grew retrospective. "We were as delighted as Penelope herself, when the business warranted taking that child from the poorhouse," she said. "We looked forward to it for some time. Grace used to say she had an impression of herself forever extending a package of Turnover candy, and that she simply couldn't get the 'please buy' expression out of her face. However, it is thoroughly established now. They are quite independent. The little granddaughter is a great help, — carries home the orders out of school hours, and does a variety of things. They are very happy!"

Mrs. Stuart's thoughts went back by the way of the first pound of candy to Mrs. Selfridge, and she said presently: —

"Mrs. Selfridge is a sweet woman. What a pity she isn't interested in Christian Science!"

"She will be some day."

"Only," returned Mrs. Stuart, after an interval, "I can't quite reconcile myself to the waiting. It seems as though she should have been one of the first, there is something so lovable about her. She and Penelope are fond of one another; but Penelope doesn't seem anxious — she never regrets anything!" with a perplexed frown.

"She can't consistently — can she? when there is nothing to regret."

"Dear me," said Mrs. Stuart in a puzzled burst. "I'm sure I don't know. What would I have thought once of such a proposition? I declare, sometimes, when I think of all those Litanies, and the Ash Wednesday collect, and all that — and how punctilious I was in the observance of the church ritual, I'm almost reduced to the condition of the old woman we read of — you know! 'If this be I, as I think it be, I've a little dog at home will wag his tail at me' — there's a need of identification!"

Her eyes travelled on by easy stages, during a laughing moment, and rested on an upland

pasture, a mile or so away, whose low growth, crimson now, and scarlet and gold and russet, showed softly through the purplish haze. "It is a beautiful day," said she. "How lovely those tints are!" with a nod toward the pasture. "Grace says Autumn is very well aware that veils are becoming, as she shows by hanging them everywhere. I'm not sure but she is right! Everything is at its best to-day, and that soft haze has even crept in among the trees."

It was a warm, sunny, happy-looking sort of day. Now and then a locust shrilled sharply, and an occasional red leaf sailed away on a passing breeze.

Dr. Chadwick dropped upon a seat in the shade of the crimson woodbine, and fanned himself with his broad-brimmed hat.

"Warm as Palestine, Dr. Chadwick," inquired Grace, who was standing within the summer-house, by old Mrs. Everett's side, "or isn't it?"

"Different," returned the doctor, slowly fanning, and looking through narrowing eyes over the pleasant grounds, "distinctly different."

Dr. Chadwick had spent three years and

more in the Holy Land, having but recently returned home. He still felt something of a stranger in the place. There was an increase upon him of his old-time dreaminess. Grace said, when she looked at him, she had a vision of the lilies of the field and Gennesaret. He was writing a book on the land where Jesus wrought his mighty works, and portions of the copious notes he had made on the spot bulged one of his pockets now. This was usually the case. "Father," Mrs. Chadwick daily remonstrated, "the skirt of your coat can't hang properly, with such a weight of papers in the pocket." But nothing cared the doctor for the hang of his coat, while he cared very much for those carefully written notes and having them handy, as he expressed it. He took them out at odd moments, wherever he chanced to be, and glanced them over with fond interest, formulating sentences on the basis of what he read, for his precious manuscript. It was difficult for him to keep his mind from the theme.

"I hardly know my young people," he said, bringing his eyes from a tour of observation among the chattering groups dotting the lawn, to rest them on Mrs. Everett's peaceful face.

"Young people change rapidly, Dr. Chadwick," she replied, with an upward glance at Grace. "Those whom you left hardly more than children are our young ladies and gentlemen now."

"True, true. Most annoying calendars! Why, here is Grace — it seems only yesterday she was learning the Catechism; and yet," — with a twirl of his thumb in the direction of Mr. Jack Prescott (who, sauntering along, with no apparent objective point, stopping to speak in a leisurely fashion with those he met, moved, nevertheless, always in one direction, the direction of the summer-house) — "and yet, what do I find? Things like this make the man who taught the Catechism look about," said Dr. Chadwick, with a slow shake of the head.

But instead of looking about, he went by quick transit, and most unexpectedly to himself, to the scenes of his recent travels. His hand moved mechanically toward the bulging pocket, but, recalled by Grace's voice, who was speaking to Mrs. Everett, the thought brought the straying member back, and he remarked, with a strong effort to keep himself in the state of Maine, "This is a very beautiful place."

"Charming!" said Grace. "I love it. It is no older than our place, but it *looks* older."

"Is — is that an advantage?" asked Dr. Chadwick, with something as near a twinkle as his eyes were capable of producing, gleaming between the half-closed lids. "But you needn't answer. I won't press the point. There *are* points, Mrs. Everett, it is as well *not* to press." And then, his pleasantry dying in the moment of its birth, he added, in a reminiscent tone: "This is the first time I have had the pleasure of entering these grounds. I have looked in occasionally, in passing — and very sombre-hued and melancholy they appeared in those days. A great change — a great change," looking about musingly, with an occasional flap of his broad-brimmed hat against his breast.

"Delightful — delightful," he resumed. "Mr. and Mrs. Hathaway had become — that is, they were not receiving company when I settled here. A great affliction had darkened their lives. I remember that, in my zeal, I wrote Mr. Hathaway, setting forth his Christian duty in terms my riper judgment leads me to feel were unwarrantable. We mellow with experience, Mrs. Everett," glancing at the sweet old face. "We

learn to trust more to God's leading, and are not so swift in putting forth our own hands to the ark. The ark is God's, and though it be shaken in our presence, it is yet in the hand of Him who ruleth over all. However," rousing from a moment's revery, "Mr. Hathaway declined, courteously but firmly, to see me; and soon after, as I remember it, they went abroad. On their return, after the stir occasioned by their arrival had subsided, they seem to have dropped again out of the general thought. I don't recall," turning his face to Mrs. Everett, with a questioning inflection in his tone, "ever to have heard them mentioned."

"I dare say not," she answered. "They were seldom spoken of during those years."

"The first rumor of a change at Weehaukn was shortly before we went away, as I recall it, but I was engrossed with what lay before me, and paid little heed to it. There were references to it, also, in occasional letters, but I was wholly unprepared for anything like this," said Dr. Chadwick, still gazing about, his big hat slowly waving before his face.

"Nothing but Christian Science could have worked the change," Grace said, in her impetuous fashion.

Dr. Chadwick made no answer. The silence was broken by the murmur of bright young voices, which came to them in lingering waves, and short bursts of sound. The summer-house was a little removed, and they saw the groups and grouping (the forming, dissolving, re-forming) amid the scarlet and gold and green, the shadows and sunshine of the beautiful grounds, as one sees the shifting figures and colors in a kaleidoscope. The crimson leaves of the woodbine sifted downward about Grace, as she stood looking at Dr. Chadwick; and a chickadee, in the background, uttered its cheery note. The minister was first to speak. He had been wandering beyond seas, but the sight of Penelope, as she floated before him, in the near distance, abruptly recalled him.

"She will make a glorious woman," he said, with a jerk of his head, to indicate of whom he was speaking. "It only shows how blind we are."

"Blind to what?"

The quick question arrested him *en route* again for Galilee, and he looked at Grace with something like mild protest in his face, as he said: —

"Eh? To what?" adding, after a little deliberation, "We should hardly have predicted this."

"I suppose not. We are always on the lookout for the worst, aren't we?"

It took a little time for this proposition to make itself clear to the doctor. Then: "Oh, no, I wouldn't say that," he answered. "What of our faith in God? And our trust in his mercy?"

His eyes dropped, and there was that in his manner that evidenced he considered the answer conclusive and final. Grace felt he was slipping away, and, notwithstanding a suspicion that he preferred ruminating in fancy among Judean hills to hearing anything more on the subject of Christian Science, stirred him up again.

"Why don't Christian people make this faith in God a power in their lives?" she asked.

"We do — we do," he answered.

A silence fell between them. Dr. Chadwick eyed Grace with furtive, upward glances, as she stood looking at the floor. They had been over the ground before, and he rather dreaded the encounters — it was so impossible for him to satisfy Grace. A stray sunbeam touched her crown of golden hair, and now and then his eyes lifted from her face to rest on her shining hair.

"Do you think, Dr. Chadwick," she asked abruptly, the blue eyes sweeping up to his face,

"that Penelope would be what she is now but for Christian Science?"

This was a question the minister had asked himself, but had not answered; he did not like to answer Grace. "Why not?" he said evasively, after a moment's waiting.

"Why not, indeed," Grace returned, smiling, as Jack Prescott, with a constancy to his purpose like that of the needle to the pole, presented himself that instant at the summer-house door. "We were speaking of Penelope," she said to him; and then, to Dr. Chadwick: —

"I think you must know, as all the rest of us do, that she would not. Christian Science has opened our eyes to the truth! It has shown us that God is infinite Love — infinite Good: and that man, as His image and likeness, must be perfect. Oh! it seems passing strange to me sometimes that we didn't see it for ourselves — it is so plain. Everything in the old thought was contradictory — I never could make head or tail out of it. You know that, Dr. Chadwick — you can't have forgotten how I used to puzzle over questions that would come up — I couldn't help myself! and *never* would get themselves settled." She looked eagerly at the minister, but his hatband engaged his attention, and he

made no answer. "You said once in a sermon," she added, regarding him with somewhat less favor than she usually felt for him, "that the spiritual is the real. I've always remembered your saying that."

To this he bowed a grave assent, but with a certain diffidence in his manner of doing so, as if uncertain to what the admission might tend.

"It is the real — isn't it?" Grace questioned with her ready enthusiasm.

"Undoubtedly."

"And good — since good is infinite?"

"Undoubtedly."

"I don't," said she, shortly, "see the least advantage in using the plus sign and giving it the minus interpretation."

Mrs. Everett bestowed a series of soothing pats upon the girl's hand, as it rested on the arm of her chair, looking thoughtfully the while a-down a pleasant vista to the pond glinting sharply in the September sunshine. "God is good," she murmured softly. "The Bible shows us that He is Love."

"And we are safe in knowing that whatever is good and beautiful comes from God," Dr. Chadwick added in a relieved way. "Why not rest here?"

"We ought to know everything *is* good and

beautiful, because it comes from God," Grace said insistently. "This understanding will heal the sick — as it did in Jesus' time. Long ago," she added after a minute's silence, "Marcia had a friend visiting her — May Ewing. You may recall her, Dr. Chadwick," with a quick turn of her face to him. "When we came home from church, she said she was glad she wasn't obliged to go to the Episcopal church all the time. Marcia asked her why, and she said she was ashamed to be seen with such miserable sinners. We had the Litany that morning, and afterwards I used always to think of what she said when we were going through that 'miserable sinners — miserable sinners — miserable sinners.' I wonder what would happen if the church changed its response, and the congregation said instead: 'We're made in God's image — we're made in God's image — we're made in God's image.'"

Dr. Chadwick's eyes moved, in their narrowing fashion, from Grace to Jack Prescott, and then down upon the floor. But he merely said, as though this were the only point requiring notice:

"Yes, I recall Miss May distinctly. A bright, vivacious girl."

"A Christian Scientist, now," said Grace.

The doctor jerked up his head. "Indeed," he returned, with a droll expression. "There are a great many Christian Scientists it seems to me."

"Come to Boston and I will convince you on that point," Jack Prescott said. "It would do you good to attend one of our testimonial meetings."

He said nothing more; and something in his eyes, as they met Grace's, recalled to her a conversation they had had that morning. "Yet here I am interfering the first thing," she thought ruefully. Then, with a sudden brightness in her tone, that seemed to lift Dr. Chadwick instantly into a freer atmosphere, she said: —

"And you can read 'Science and Health.'"

"Yes," he nodded, smiling. "A certain young lady," with a turn to Mrs. Everett, "who has been a dear friend of mine since her golden head was on a level with my knee, having kindly provided me with a copy."

"'And when they looked, the stone was rolled away,'" Grace murmured. Dr. Chadwick turned his head inquiringly, but Mr. Hathaway appearing, he turned it back again, and the words upon his lips died away unuttered.

"I have been looking for Dr. Chadwick," Mr.

Hathaway said, in his genial tone. "I thought we might enjoy a stroll together, while I hear something of your travels. It is your return, doubtless, that has brought the subject especially to mind; but I have a strong feeling that I should greatly enjoy visiting the Holy Land."

If such a thing ever happened, the doctor's eyes sparkled that moment. There was no slaking of his thirst to discourse on his travels. The more he talked, the more there was to say; the theme was inexhaustible. Grace, watching, smiled.

"It is a perfect day," she said to Mr. Hathaway. "It would be difficult to imagine one more lovely. It seems made for the occasion."

"Perfect," he replied. "It does my eyes good to see these grounds alight with life and color, and to hear these mirthful sounds is a joy in itself. We shall miss Penelope — yet there is none of the sadness of good-by about her going."

Dr. Chadwick fumbled with his hat. He was uncertain how to reply to this, and while he was turning the matter over in his mind, and before he had reached any conclusion, Mr. Hathaway's eyes, that alone had addressed this last remark to him, turned upon Mrs. Everett.

"The place seems to me to have changed very little," he said. "Possibly because I have moved along with it."

"Very little," she responded. "I have thought of it several times while sitting here. It looks very like it used to in—"

"In the old days," he finished, as she hesitated. "I like to feel that it is so."

Dr. Chadwick watched him curiously. It was astounding to hear him speak in that tone of voice, and with that look upon his face, of a past that held those long years of bitterness and pain. It was as though they had never been. Yet the good man was a trifle uncomfortable for him — a trifle uncomfortable for them all. He could not shake off the apprehension that they were on dangerous ground, and was anxious and flurried to get away.

"That is a vigorous vine," he ventured, as a safe remark, indicating with the hand still holding his hat the Virginia creeper, covering the summer-house.

Mr. Hathaway's eyes moved quickly over it. "Yes," he said, adding: "Love planted it — a tiny shoot it was then. Our daughter," in an explanatory tone to Dr. Chadwick.

The doctor's face had fallen. He felt quite startled for the instant. "I — I — hadn't supposed it to be so old," he stammered.

Old! Yet Mr. Hathaway could see, as though it were an event of the passing hour, the flower-face of the young girl peering up at him, as she said, spanking the earth about the vine roots with her trowel, "Now, papa — it *must* live."

With the words sounding in his memory, Mr. Hathaway's eyes lingered for a little among the leaves. "It is especially beautiful at this season of the year," he said quietly, turning to Dr. Chadwick. "It makes a gorgeous bit of color right here when there is little else but the evergreens."

The kind-hearted minister was greatly relieved. "There is certainly a power in Christian Science," he mentally commented. A locust shrilled suddenly, long and loud; from the hedge came a cheery "Chick-a-dee-dee-dee." The doctor pricked up his ears. "That is the first time I have heard that little song in a long time," he remarked in a satisfied tone. "I am glad to hear it — I like the chickadees."

Grace smiled, thinking how many times the cheerful notes had sounded in his unheeding

ears that afternoon, but she kept her thoughts on the subject to herself.

Mr. Hathaway linked his arm within the doctor's, and they walked away together. Had Mrs. Chadwick been there to view, she would, undoubtedly, have lamented the sag of her lord's coat tails, and certain "outs" — as she characterized that lop-sided loose-jointedness of the reverend man's make-up on those rare occasions when she told herself he really did fall a trifle below the standard of absolute perfection. These defects were brought out and emphasized on this occasion, no doubt, by the erect figure and fine carriage of his companion. But the doctor, as unconscious of his appearance as he would have been indifferent to it, had it been brought to his notice, ambled amiably on, pleased with the prospect of this new friendship, and discoursing of the "mountains round about Jerusalem," to the man who had pierced beyond the shadow, and could have told him what those mountains signify.

"Backs are *so* expressive," said Grace, looking after the pair. "Next to feet give me backs. Squatty, square, slim, trim — they speak volumes without a word. And feet! Feet are an unfail-

ing delight. Oh, you wouldn't laugh if you had discovered how interesting they are! I saw one at Trinity Church in Boston once — it came into my sketches for years — like a little perennial! Then it immortalized itself. Yes," with a laughing nod, "that is the very foot. It enters humorously," in explanation to Mrs. Everett, "into a little picture — the first picture I did for Jack. It is very effective!" she laughed gayly, and Jack laughed too.

"I saw that foot, as I said, years ago at Trinity Church, but I can see it this minute just as plainly as I could then. The man was out in the porch — I think it's a porch — at the left of the chancel, and all I could see of him was this foot, and a bit of ankle. His legs were crossed, and every few minutes this foot gave a jerk upward, and without meaning to, I began an imitation. Bishop Brooks was preaching, and after a time I discovered it was merely a method the foot had of checking off what it liked. How did I discover it? Oh, it was simple! I was young, then, and discoveries came natural. I listened to the sermon with all my ears after that, with my eyes on that foot, and my thoughts on my own, trying to see which of us would get the Bishop's thought the soonest, and

kick first. I didn't see the man, though I tried afterward, but I know just how he looked."

She craned her pretty head forward to look at Jack across Mrs. Everett, who was walking between them, as she said, laughing: —

"Why, can't you see? Thin, eager, listening, with his mouth open and head on one side."

Jack laughed. "That's the picture," he said. "You must see that picture sometime, Mrs. Everett."

"That's a fine tennis court," Grace said critically. "One would never believe, to look around, that there are no young people living here. It's so homey. But there's seldom a day that some of us aren't here — a dozen at a time often. We're always sure of a welcome. What a delicious day this is! It seems as though the world were just waiting now — all rush and hurry over. Oh, there's little Barbara Turnover! I'm glad she could come — poor child!"

"I don't know why I said it in that tone," she went on, as though some protest had been offered, "she hasn't that sense of herself. She told me once — when she was first taken from that — shelter! that she would like to give one of her dresses to some poor little girl, for she needed

only two herself, and had three. I wanted to get at her thought, so I said, 'You aren't poor, are you, Barbara?' She shook her head. 'Not now,' she said. 'I was once, but now I am a very rich little girl.' I thought it was so sweet! She's a good child." Then, with a swift change in her tone: "As old Mrs. Pole said, when she told mamma the doleful story of having had an apple-pie stolen, ''Twas a *g-o-o-d* pie!' How happy every one looks! I know Timothy Tate has had refreshments — he just scintillates!"

"They are in very comfortable circumstances now, are they not?" Mrs. Everett said, reverting presently to the subject of the Turnovers.

"Oh, yes. I wish, Mrs. Everett, you would go down to their little nest. It would interest you. Clean as a penny, geraniums always in bloom, and now Barbara has made a white muslin curtain for the window. Its flutter was all the room lacked. Then it delights Mrs. Turnover to have the gentle-folks call. You should hear her say 'gentle-folks.' I always feel apologetic — as though she were being engulfed in a maelstrom of commonalty, while I, with no more reason for being there than she has, am winging the blue. But she's a good soul — It was a *g-o-o-d* pie!"

Mrs. Everett and Jack both laughed; her intonation and expression were so irresistibly droll. Then Mrs. Everett said, with mild enthusiasm:—

"I think I will go, Grace. I hardly know why I haven't been before — chiefly, I suppose, because I have so many young people to execute my commissions."

"It's the style," said Grace. "Everybody goes — and you'll feel repaid, I'm sure. It is the sort of vine-covered cot one reads about; and in a sense I consider I helped it to be. That's a satisfaction. It adds a lustre to the whitewash, no doubt. It's surprising," with a laugh, "how much candy one can eat at duty's call. Oh, no — not now. There is no longer the necessity. I eat it or leave it just as I choose. But there was a time — oh, well — I've felt the thrill of freedom! I never suspected Agnes of fraud but once — I couldn't help surmising she provided the birds with more candy than they really required."

"How gay we are!" said Rosamond Selfridge, emerging from a by-path, with Damon Whitney and Hope Dillingham. "We heard the laughing before we could see you, but I knew the voices.

How beautiful it is here this afternoon — it will be lovely on the pond to-night!"

"Won't it? Did you know, Mrs. Everett — eighteen boats on the pond to-night? It was Love's idea. Mr. Hathaway had — oh, I don't know how many, brought from the club boat-house."

"Four from eighteen, Hope," Grace suggested slyly.

"I was never good at numbers. But I can shut my eyes and see the pond as pl-ain. There's the moonlight — then music. If there's anything in the world I do enjoy, it is floating by moonlight."

"Some enjoy floating by daylight," observed Rosamond, with a motion of her white hand toward the willows. "They make a charming picture — it looks deliciously cool and —"

"Insinuating," suggested Grace.

"Thanks. That expresses it better than any word I can find. If I were an artist, I should always paint cool, shadowy pictures, with the water reflecting the trees, as the pond is reflecting the willows now; sometimes with a dash of crimson and russet along the banks, and sometimes not, you know. But always with a boat, and a

young man in it, and a girl in white with pale green ribbons — isn't she lovely! There now — if only one could catch that pose!" as Stella, bending slightly sidewise, watched with absorbing interest the play of her slender fingers in the water.

"Could Stella hear these remarks, the charm would dissolve," laughed Grace. "She is the most graceful creature I know of, when unconscious of herself, but let her get a hint that one is noticing her, and she stiffens like a poker. I've had experience!"

"They look pretty enough now! But think of Nicholas taking anybody out in a boat!"

"Think of Stella going with him!" laughed Jack. "Either she has met with a transformation or Nick has. Something must have happened."

"Oh, Stella loves the water, Jack," Grace shrugged.

"Poor Nicholas," commiserated Rosamond. "I wish he *could* make up his mind to be a little more agreeable. But they make a sweet picture!"

The afternoon waned. The sun went down behind the hills, and as it disappeared the big full moon floated up from the eastern horizon. The coming of the night queen was hailed with acclamation.

"You dear, kind-faced old lady," said Sally Damon. "How lovely in you to come so early! But I've never seen the moon rise and the sun set the same minute before!"

"It's holiday up there! They're off their tasks," grinned Herbert Selfridge, with a wink at Evelyn. His twin giggled. "They're at their games," she added. "See-saw up, see-saw down, now the *moon* sees all over town."

"I don't remember seeing it like this either," Penelope said musingly. There was something about the lazily drifting, small pink clouds that called up the memory of her fourteenth birthday — the day of her first party — when she had sat at her window and cried, and afterwards had watched the full moon sail upward, just as it was sailing now. How strange it all seemed, as she looked back upon it! What an unreal experience! The orchestra recalled her, and she flushed a little, as Agnes said, with her soft laugh, so like Helen's, "Did you have a good time, Penny?"

Penelope laughed, but did not answer the question. "How lovely the music is!" she said; "so soft and low. Hasn't it a far-away sound? Oh, they're dancing!"

Hannah came out of the house, and Penelope beckoned, and went to meet her.

"Is it like that other party, Hannah?" she asked. "You know — the one you told me about."

"I've been thinking of it all the afternoon, dearie," declared Hannah. "It's as like it as — " searching for a simile, "as one pea is like another. And if anybody says it ain't, they don't know! I haven't forgotten the day I told you. You were going to have a party then yourself — your first party! and says you 'when I am eighteen, Hannah, I'm going to have a lawn party, and we'll dance among the trees in white too.' And sure enough, here's the party — and as I live," turning sharply, as the music struck upon her ear, "if there ain't the dancing too! You always was the best little thing for keeping your word."

They watched the dancers for a moment or two in silence, and then Hannah said, with evident admiration of her own descriptive powers: —

"Just as I told it, ain't it — gliding in and out — in and out among the trees, now lost, now plain, the dresses white and shimmery. There's no grace whatever in a dancing man!" with sudden disfavor, "and what they want to do it for is more than I can guess. But," in a burst of enthusiasm,

"the young ladies look like seraphs! Aren't you going to dance, pettie?"

"After a little; I have to say good-by to those who are going. Most of the older people are going soon, and the children — the extremes, as Grace says. I wouldn't miss speaking to each of them for anything! How well you look, Hannah, in that black dress and white collar!"

"I ain't partial to black — in any relation of life," returned Hannah, with a grimace, "though it seems to be the portion lotted out to me. Jackson says — but never mind what Jackson says! I keep a sort of mental manuscript for my own edification, but I ain't obliged to quote from it. Black isn't so bad to get along with!"

"A good wearing color?" Penelope suggested shyly.

"Fair. Keep it dusted up!"

"I am so happy, Hannah," Penelope said presently, with a joyous light in her sweet face. "I seem to get new views of my happiness every hour!"

"And to think there was ever a time when your old Hannah thought happiness was fighting shy," said that quondam doubter, with a disapproving shake of her head. "Just trying

to make it plain — sitting up nights, as you might say, to do it. Jackson says — no, Jackson doesn't say! When I think of it, dearie, I feel like the light-fingered boy you used to read about, who took the yellowbird's nest and then 'hung his head, and went and hid behind the bed.'"

Penelope smiled. "None of us remembered, Hannah, until Love came and showed us that the Bible says we are to rejoice always. We don't mean to rob others, or take from them even in our faintest thought that which belongs to them — it is because we don't understand. You thought there was something about me that meant unhappiness — but you learned afterward that there was not."

She was thinking along this line, as she stood beside Love Hathaway on the piazza, later on. The last lingering good-by had been said; there was an occasional stir of the night wind in the trees; and a few pale little stars looked inquisitively down upon Weehaukn. "Rejoice always," she kept saying to herself, getting, as she did so, a clearer realization of the meaning of those words. It was what Love had said to her that spring morning, four years before.

"But I can't rejoice," she had answered. "How can *I* rejoice?"

"There are no exceptions specified," Love had told her; "the precept is 'Rejoice evermore.' There *must* be something tangible to rejoice over."

She knew it now. A song of gladness filled her heart. She smiled into the future. "Now, Lord, what wait I for?" she mused. It was wonderful to Penelope to watch the joyous unfoldment of her life. "Oh, papa," she cried, as he came upon the piazza, "I'm so happy — so happy! what gladness to know we have the right to rejoice always!"

She was very tall; he bent his eyes but little as he looked into her own. He thought of the dark night when he sat on the little bridge, with Penelope on his knee, the fireflies thickly twinkling in the gloom, with the first pale little ray from the Christian Science gospel making a soft shining in his heart, and heard her tell, with a confidence at which he had wondered at the time, what this blessed gospel of Truth was to do for her; and as he thought, a great joy and gratitude, too deep for words, filled his heart to overflowing. "Strike out Christian

Science from the lives of those near him at that moment," looking from Mrs. Hathaway to Love, and from Love back to Penelope, "and what would be left to them?"

"Oh, thank God, all," he said with such fervor of mental ejaculation, he strangely felt they might have heard him, as though he had spoken aloud.

"Ah," said Penelope, holding up a forefinger, with a smile. "Hear? They are singing on the water. How sweet it is!"

They listened till the song died away. There was an occasional glimmer of lights between the trees as the boats moved about; lanterns hung thickly in the dark places among the evergreens; and the moonlight silvered the world. Penelope and Love ran down the steps, confronting Dr. Chadwick presently, as he emerged from the cypress walk, his hands clasped behind him, one of them grasping a sheet of his precious notes. But he had not been looking at them, nor wandering even in thought amid the mazes of his manuscript. Halting abruptly when he saw them, "Penelope," he said, "I have been pondering this fact — that when they *looked*, the stone was rolled away."

When the girls moved on again, he stood looking after them, shaking his head in a musing fashion.

"Wonderful — wonderful," he was saying in his heart. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Long ago a little deformed girl had wished for enough of prettiness so that she need not shrink from observation. Mrs. Hathaway did not know this, but with Penelope's radiant image lingering in her memory, she turned her serene face to Mr. Stuart, and said with a happy smile: —

"All your daughters are pretty, Jerome; but Penelope is beautiful."

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